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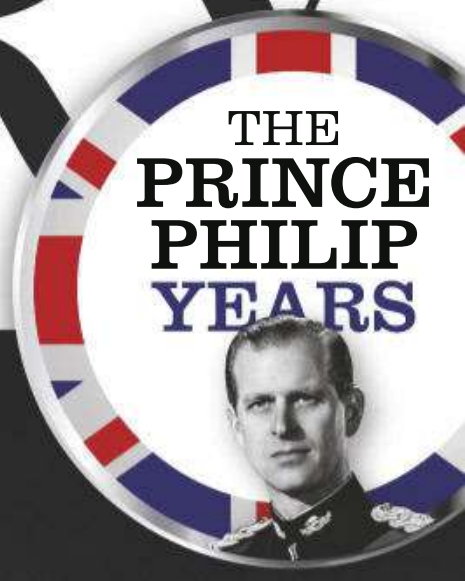
CHURCHILL'S GREAT WARTIME GAMBLE

WHY HE RISKED THE FLEET IN 1942

HISTORY MAGAZINE



BRITAIN'S BESTSELLING HISTORY MAGAZINE
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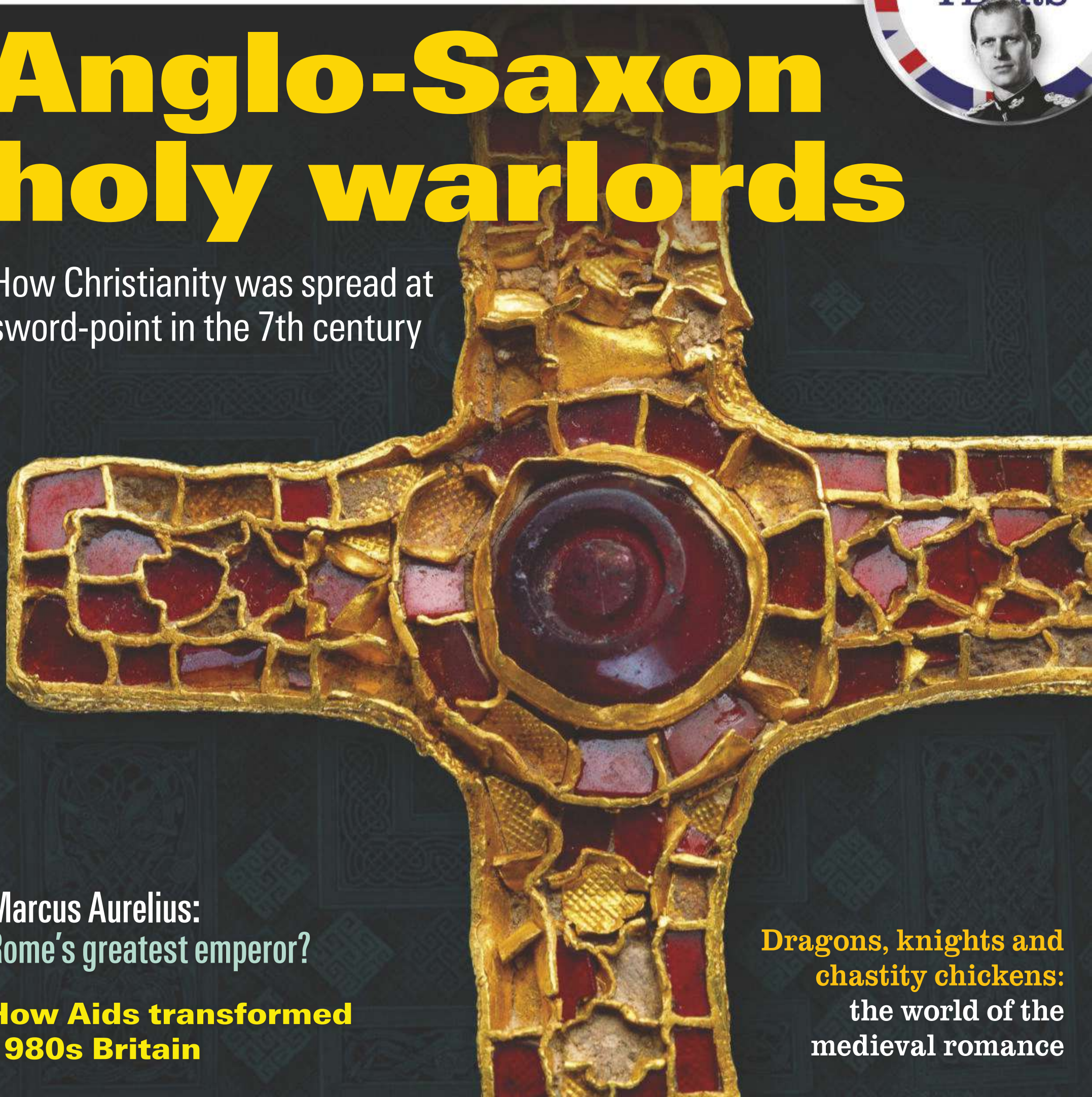
Anglo-Saxon holy warlords

How Christianity was spread at sword-point in the 7th century



Marcus Aurelius:
Rome's greatest emperor?

How Aids transformed 1980s Britain

Dragons, knights and chastity chickens: the world of the medieval romance

Inspired by The National Archives' records discovered on Ancestry

NO VOTES FOR WOMEN NO CENSUS

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

PROFESSION or OCCUPATION
of Persons aged ten years and upwards.

Personal Occupation.

The reply should show the precise branch of Profession, Trade, Manufacture, &c.

If engaged in any Trade or Manufacture, the particular kind of work done, and the Article made or Material worked or dealt in should be clearly indicated.

(See Instructions 1 to 8 and Examples on back of Schedule.)

10.

Industry or Service with which worker is connected.

This question should generally be answered by stating the business carried on by the employer. If this is clearly shown in Col. 10 the question need not be answered here.

No entry needed for Domestic Servants in private employment.

If employed by a public body (Government, Municipal, etc.) state what body.

(See Instruction 9 and Examples on back of Schedule.)

11.

XX

NO persons

only women

CENSUS MEETING.
APRIL 1st.
TRAFALGAR SQUARE,
3 p.m.

It started with her name.

Which led me to a ten year old girl made to work. Her brothers went to school, her wages went to the family.

This unfairness must have ignited something in her as years later she boycotted the 1911 census. Imprisoned and willing to risk everything for the movement, she never gave up.

The Suffragettes paved the way for women to vote and I discovered she was one of them. My Great, Great Aunt. Eliza Dobson.

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WELCOME

BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

JUNE 2021

“It was while we were putting this issue together that the sad news broke of the death of the Duke of Edinburgh. **Prince Philip** was a fixture of British public life for almost three-quarters of a century, and indeed only a minority of Britons can recall a time when he was not the royal consort. Over his 99 years Philip witnessed a huge variety of social and cultural developments, and in a special feature this month Alwyn Turner explores how Philip’s own life embodied many of these changes. You’ll find that on page 58.

For our cover story we’re revisiting one of the most important episodes of English history: the conversion of the **Anglo-Saxons to the Christian faith**. In the traditional telling this was largely a benign, peaceful affair, but the historian Marc Morris has a very different view. In his article on page 22 he argues that, in many cases, Christianity was spread not by the enlightening words of holy men, but through “compulsion, violence and bloodshed”.

Elsewhere this month, we’re covering a huge array of topics, from the remarkable reign of Roman emperor **Marcus Aurelius** (page 50), to the magical world of the **medieval romance** (page 71), and one of the **greatest naval gambles of the Second World War** (page 88). Plus, as Coventry becomes UK City of Culture, we trace the rise and fall of its **car industry** (page 78), and 40 years from the start of the **Aids crisis**, we explore its impact on Britain in the 1980s (page 30).

I hope you enjoy the issue.

Rob Attar
Editor

THIS ISSUE’S CONTRIBUTORS

Marc Morris
I spent the last five years researching and writing a book on the Anglo-Saxons. The process by which a pagan people were converted to Christianity was one I found particularly fascinating.
Marc argues that the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons was a brutal affair **on page 22**

Shushma Malik
My current work explores the afterlives of Roman emperors – such as Marcus Aurelius – and how these seemingly familiar political figures have been represented in different places and at different times.
Shushma reveals why the man of peace decided to take up the sword **on page 50**

Scott Ellsworth
As a child growing up in the middle of the United States, I had heard stories of my hometown’s hidden tragedy. A century later, we’re still learning more.
Scott chronicles the Tulsa Race Massacre, the United States’ worst single episode of racial violence **on page 42**

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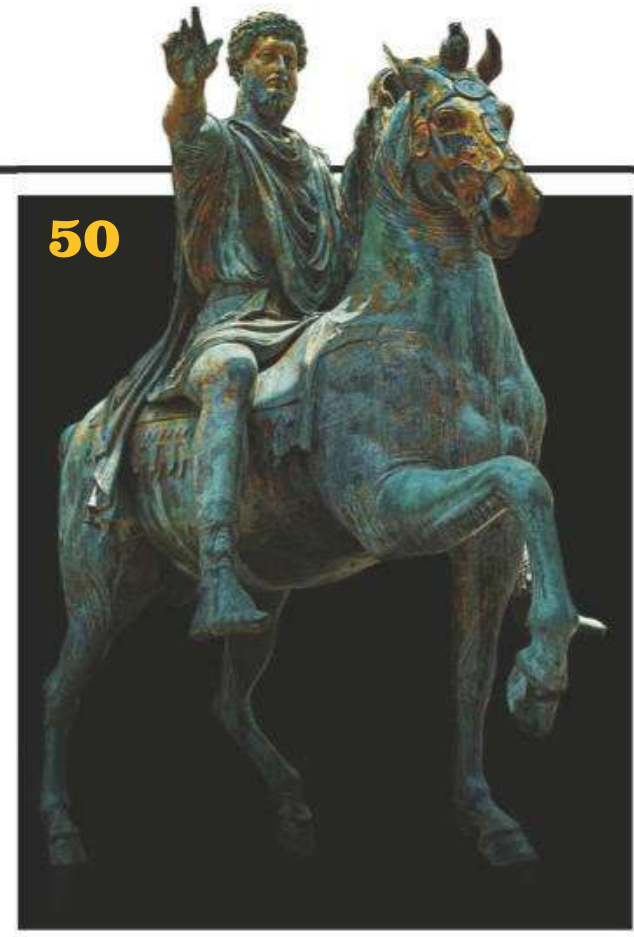

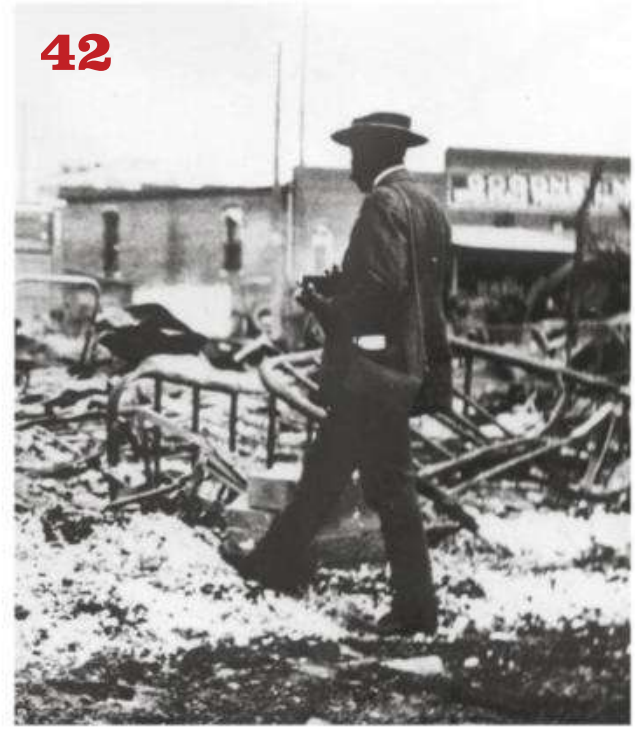

Find out why Britain initially struggled to cope with the emergence of HIV/Aids, on page 30

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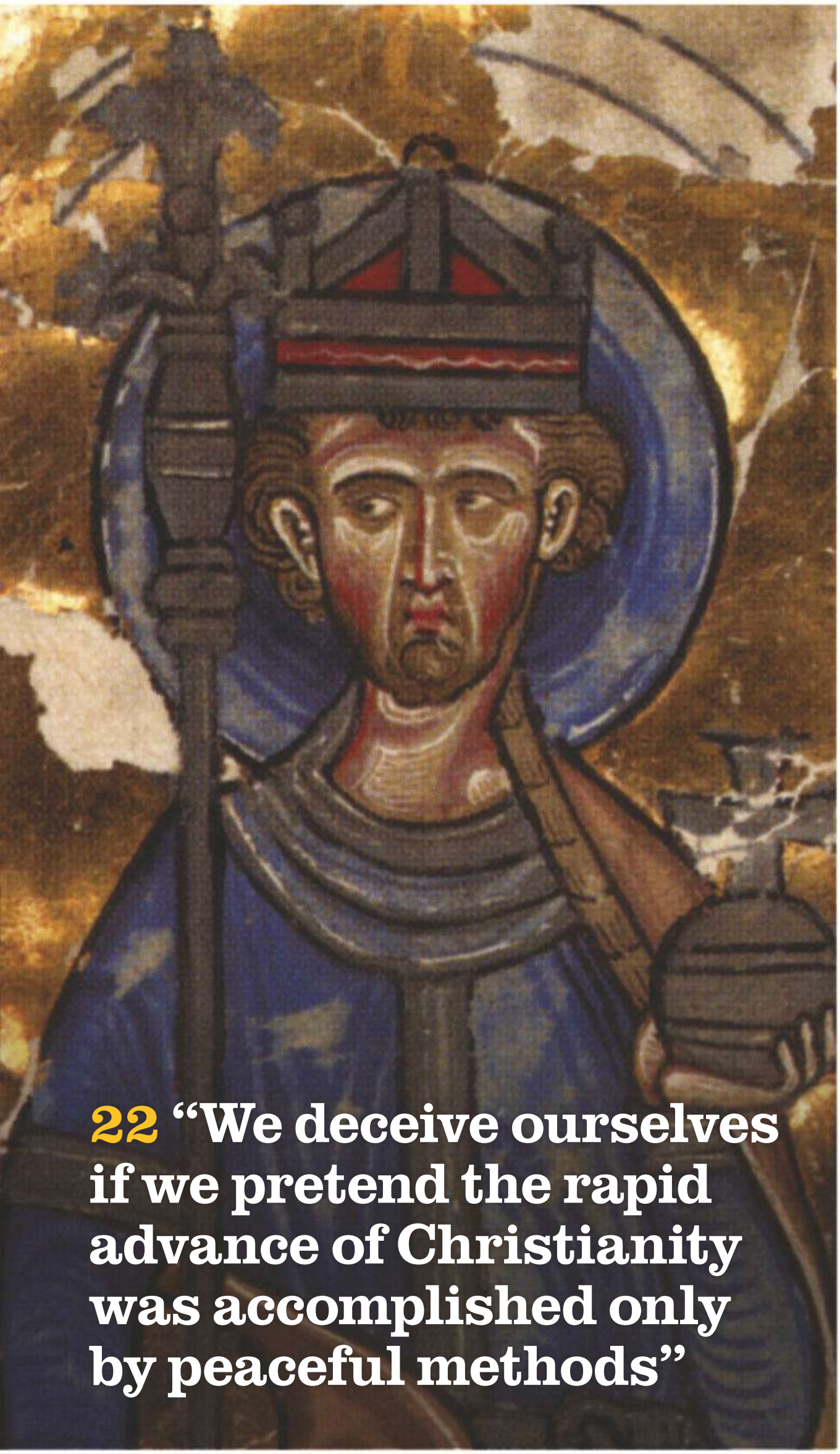

22 “We deceive ourselves if we pretend the rapid advance of Christianity was accomplished only by peaceful methods”

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THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

EYE-OPENER

Lost metropolis

These walls emerging from the sand offer the first glimpse of an ancient city long buried beneath Egypt's desert.

The metropolis, found late last year, is the largest ancient city ever discovered in the country. Known as So'oud Atun, it dates from more than 3,000 years ago and was built during the reign of Amenhotep III, a period of cultural and economic prosperity for Egypt. Experts have identified several neighbourhoods in the city, including an administrative area and a residential district.

Discoveries so far include a bakery complete with ovens, coloured pottery, and amulets shaped like scarab beetles. Archaeologists are now working to learn more about the residents of this sprawling urban settlement. Betsy Bryan, Alexander Badawy professor of Egyptian art and archaeology at Johns Hopkins University, called the find "the second most important archaeological discovery since the tomb of Tutankhamun".

REUTERS

Have a story? Please email Matt Elton at matt.elton@immediate.co.uk

TALKING POINTS

Medieval matter

Which objects best encapsulate life in the Middle Ages? From coins and maps to rather more unusual items, Twitter was on hand to provide suggestions. **ANNA WHITELOCK** took stock

"Dear #medievaltwitter, if you were going to attempt a 'history of the Middle Ages in 30 objects' type of tutorial for a student who is getting interested in curatorial studies, what are some of your must-include items?" So tweeted **Holly Barbaccia** (@TrobadoraB) recently.

As ever, fellow users of the social network were quick to oblige. **Ahmet D Altunbaş** (@Ricoldus) was the first to respond: "I know it's a bit clichéd, but I'd never go out without my leper bell, which is representative of a certain period." **Carrie Benes** (@cebenes2) selected the "[12th-century] Winchester Bible or Gentile da Fabriano's [1423 painting] *Adoration of the Magi*", while other tweeters also highlighted the key role played by medieval documents and their production. **Blaise** (@blaisepascal2nd) nominated Johannes Gutenberg's 15th-century printing press, while **Jule Meyer** (@jul3_m) chose the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, a 13th-century parchment bearing what's thought to be a copy of an ancient map of the Roman empire. The selection wouldn't be complete, of course, without Magna Carta, nominated by **Sharon Bennett Connolly** (@Thehistorybits).

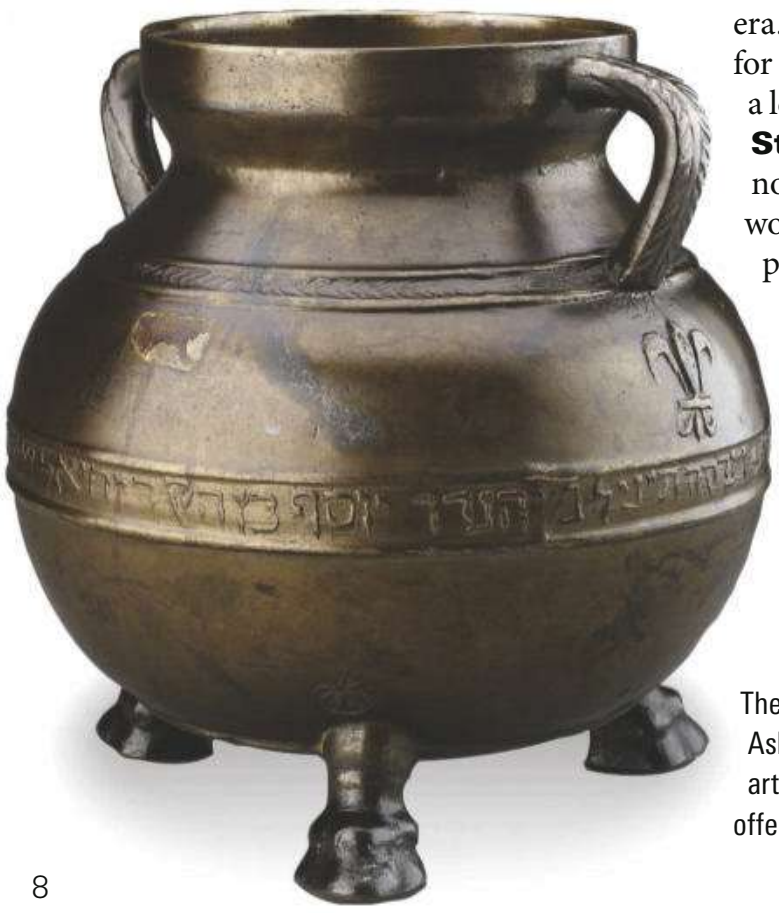
Artefacts also received their fair share of the attention. **Dr Rachel Delman** (@rachel_delman) pointed to the Museum of London website for "everyday objects: medieval hairpins, pilgrim badges, keys, etc". **Ed Skeates** (@EPSkeates) highlighted medieval arrows: "there's the military aspect, sure. But the craft aspect of the longbow and arrows is really fascinating as a route into studying medieval trades, how they interacted with one another, and the family aspect of craft names: arrowsmith, fletcher, bowyer, stringfellow".

Join the debate at **twitter.com/historyextra**

Dean Irwin (@medievaljews) noted that "The Jews have to be represented! Possibly the Bodleian Bowl in the Ashmolean believed to have been brought back from the Crusades; it was made in France, and its inscription makes reference to a French rabbi". **Rob Haug** (@Rob_Haug) suggested "A Viking horde of Central Asian silver coins or something flashy such as King Offa's gold dinar that shows the movement of coinage along long distance trade routes." **Joseph M Davis** (@Joseph_M_Davis) voted for "the Golden Rhinoceros of Mapungubwe [from what is now South Africa]".

Finally, other Twitter users highlighted a variety of smaller objects that offer insights into everyday lives of people in the medieval era. **Tora Yome** (@ToraYome1) plumped for "a drop spindle, bone needles, dice [or] a leather mug lined with wax". Meanwhile, **Strike the Right Note** (@strikerightnote) listed items including a "marquetry wooden comb, an ornate waffle iron, a prayer book, sword and shoes". It all makes you wonder what objects might be included in a similar list from our own era… H

Anna Whitelock is professor of the history of monarchy and head of the history department at Royal Holloway University of London



The Bodleian Bowl, on display at Oxford's Ashmolean Museum, was among the artefacts highlighted by Twitter users as offering a window into the medieval world

A Roman building complex uncovered in Scarborough. The site was damaged days after the find was announced

ARCHAEOLOGY

Roman find "is first of its kind in UK"

The announcement of the discovery of what could be a Roman villa complex near Scarborough has created excitement among archaeologists – and highlighted the vulnerability of such sites to criminal activity.

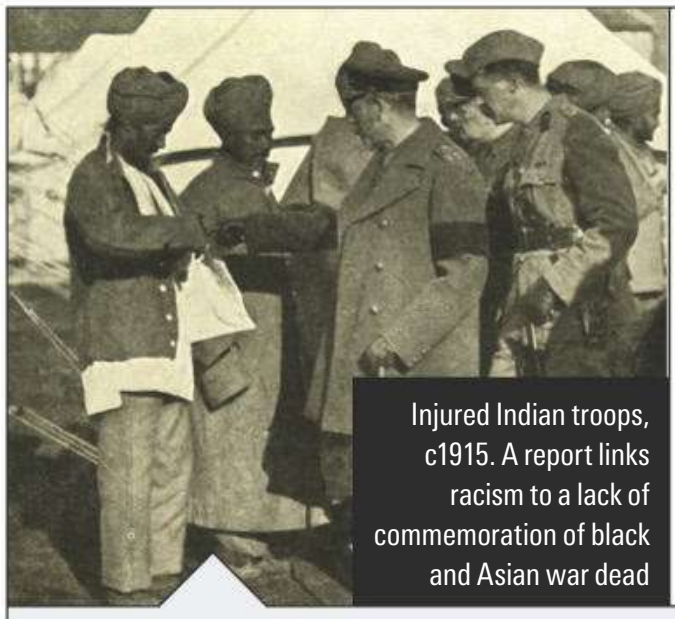
Work carried out last year at the site of a new housing development in the village of Eastfield suggests the presence of a large complex of buildings. As well as a circular central room from which a number of other rooms extend, experts also uncovered what's thought to have been a bath house. It's the first time that such a layout has been found in Britain, and may also be the first of its kind to be discovered anywhere in the Roman empire. A Historic England (HE) statement described the find as "easily the most important Roman discovery of the past decade".

The announcement also attracted less desirable attention, however. Less than a week after the find was announced, HE reported that the site had been damaged by intruders – potentially illegal metal detectorists. "As the archaeological potential of the area has been publicly known for some time, it is a hotspot for illegal metal detecting," said HE's inspector of ancient monuments, Keith Emerick. Such heritage crime is a significant concern: a 2012 HE report suggested that almost a fifth of England's listed buildings had been physically affected by crime within the previous year. The housing development company working at the site has now increased security, and archaeological work is set to continue. H

GETTY IMAGES/MAP ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRACTICE

HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of the stories hitting the **history headlines**



Injured Indian troops, c1915. A report links racism to a lack of commemoration of black and Asian war dead

"Pervasive racism" led to failure to honour black and Asian troops

Tens of thousands of black and Asian people who died fighting for the British empire in the First World War were not properly commemorated due to "pervasive racism", a Commonwealth War Graves Commission report has said. It found that at least 116,000 – and possibly as many as 350,000 – predominantly African casualties "were not commemorated by name or possibly not commemorated at all". Troops were instead honoured collectively or listed in registers.

The enquiry was set up following a 2019 Channel 4 documentary (which was produced by the historian David Olusoga's TV company and presented by the Labour MP David Lammy), although the commission's head, Claire Horton, accepted that evidence of the discrepancy has been available for longer. Horton said that the commission was "apologising unreservedly".

Prime Minister Boris Johnson stated that he was "deeply troubled" by the findings and offered an "unreserved apology" on behalf of the government.

Historical Scottish clothing goes on virtual display

Clothes including a Victorian wedding dress, military uniforms and a waistcoat believed to have been owned by Bonnie Prince Charlie can now be viewed online in a new virtual exhibition. Highland Threads, featuring items from 14 museums around Scotland, allows online visitors to explore high-resolution images of each garment, as well as detailed historical background and videos. To view the clothes, visit *highlandthreads.co.uk*

This jacket and waistcoat, reportedly owned by Bonnie Prince Charlie, feature in a new virtual gallery

Bronze Age slab is "oldest map yet found in Europe"

The intricate carvings on this 4,000-year-old stone may seem, at first glance, to be abstract – but new research suggests that they were intended to depict an area in Brittany, north-western France.

The new analysis, published in the *Bulletin of the French Prehistoric Society*, identified "repeated motifs joined by lines" – possibly a 3D representation of the valley surrounding the Odet river, which flows through the peninsula and into the Atlantic.

Comparison with the landscape suggested that the rock carvings correspond to an 18-mile stretch of the river to an accuracy of about 80 per cent – making it the oldest known map of an identified territory yet discovered in Europe.

The 2-metre by 1.5-metre slab, thought to have been created between 2150 BC and 1600 BC, itself has a storied history. It was unearthed in AD 1900 before being lost again for almost a century, till researchers found it once more in the cellar of a chateau owned by a local archaeologist.

21st-century technology helps recreate 16th-century concert

Experts have used cutting-edge techniques to recreate what a 16th-century choral performance may have sounded like in a now-ruined venue. Researchers used 3D laser scanning to create a virtual model of the chapel at Linlithgow Palace in West Lothian, and applied the acoustic properties of the building's materials, as they were when it was intact, to a new recording. The team now plans to use the results in a "virtual experience" at the chapel. H

Linlithgow Palace in Scotland, the ruined chapel of which has been recreated to host a virtual "concert"

ALAMY/DENIS GLIKSMAN-INRAP/IMAGE BY JIM DUNN FOR INVERNESS MUSEUM & ART GALLERY, HIGH LIFE HIGHLAND

Walking a dangerous road

The recent death of Sarah Everard sparked outrage, with protests breaking out across the United Kingdom. **NELL DARBY** argues that women's safety in public spaces has never been assured, with the threat of violence stalking the streets from the Victorian era to the present day

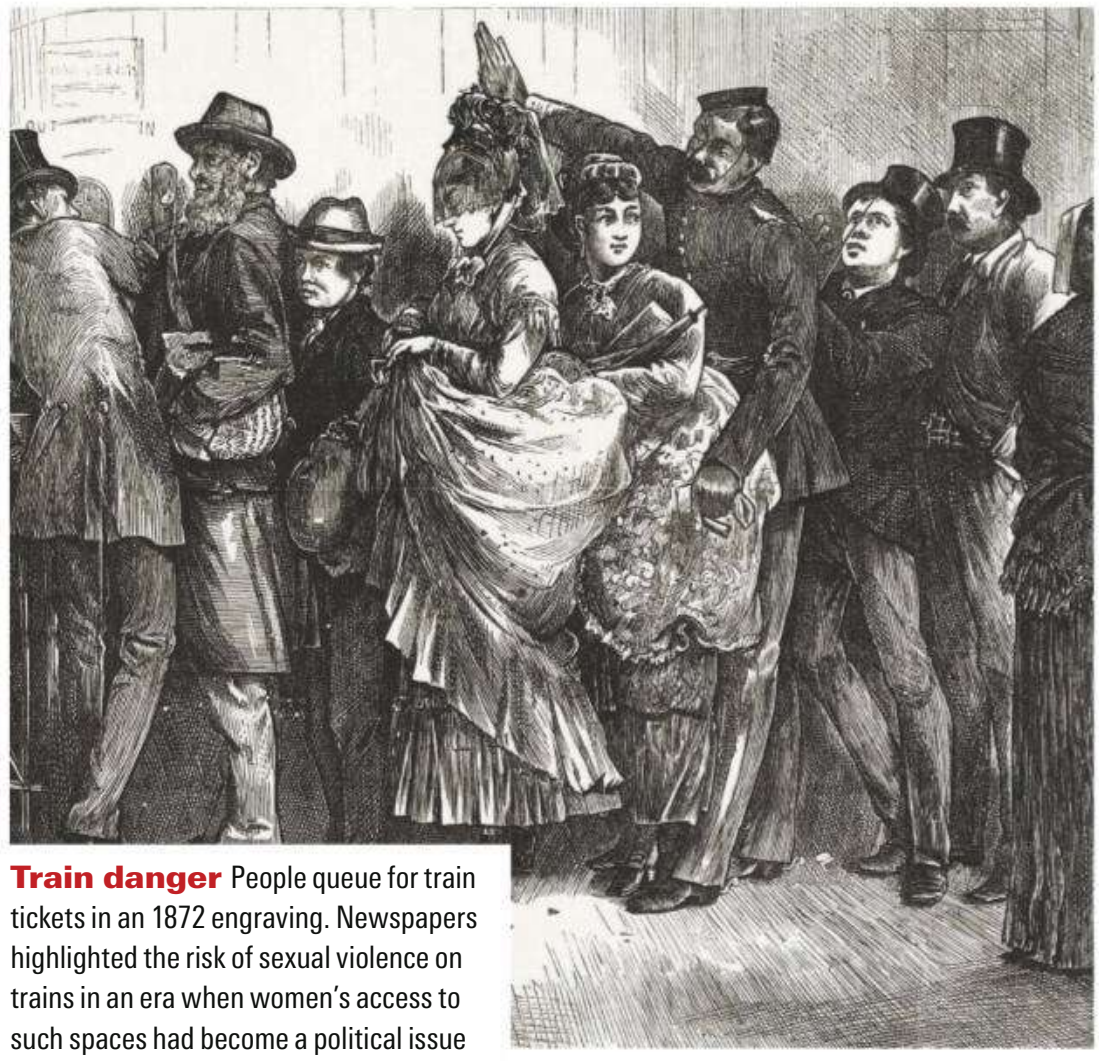
With the disappearance and death of Sarah Everard in south London in March, women's safety – and their rights to use public spaces without the fear of coming to harm – have dominated news headlines and social media. Sarah was walking from Clapham to Brixton, a journey that should have taken her 50 minutes. How could a woman go missing simply walking home from a friend's house?

More than 70 per cent of women in the UK say they have experienced sexual harassment in public. Debate about this case has brought forward numerous stories from other women about instances where they have felt threatened in public spaces, together with comments implying that a woman on her own should not have been walking at night in an urban space. Although men are also victims of assault in public spaces, it is rare for a male victim to be blamed for being in the "wrong" place at the wrong time – and arguments about women's use of public spaces, and their safety within them, are nothing new.

Public space has historically been a male space, designed, built and shaped by men for their own use. This can be seen in even the smallest of details in the Victorian city, from the absence of wide enough pavements and pedestrian space to push baby carriages and perambulators, to public toilets in 19th-century London catering overwhelmingly to men.

In previous centuries, although class impacted to some extent on what women could and couldn't do, they were largely viewed as occupying a separate sphere, a more domestic space. Their ability to move around public spaces, whether in urban or rural areas, was more circumscribed than men's. In the 18th century, for example, women's space was seen as more domestic, being focused on their homes, and on specific activities such as doing the laundry, shopping and churchgoing – although some, of course, did work. Men were able to utilise a wider range of

Shopping spree Three women shop together on the music-sheet cover for an 1859 song. In the Victorian era, more women ventured into city centres – and harassment rose



Train danger People queue for train tickets in an 1872 engraving. Newspapers highlighted the risk of sexual violence on trains in an era when women's access to such spaces had become a political issue

MARY EVANS

Taking to the streets
Women protest in London following the death of Sarah Everard, 2021. Moral judgments have long been made about women who venture out at night alone

REUTERS

spaces without judgment, even if only walking through the city on their own, particularly at night.

Conversely, moral judgments were made about women who ventured out after dark, or on their own. This is clear from the evidence of court cases, where female victims were put in the dock as often as the men they had accused. Where had the woman been attacked? What had she been doing there? Had she really made clear that she did not want the attack? The onus, in cases involving assaults that occurred in public spaces, was on the woman to prove she was respectable and had been out for an acceptable reason. In 1824, one newspaper published an account of a woman being assaulted in public near Bristol by three men. The coverage made clear that she was "a very respectable girl" and that, therefore, her being out walking at seven o'clock at night was for an innocent and acceptable reason.

Women's responsibility

During the Victorian era, as women gained increasing independence, their access to public space became a more political issue, and thus the focus of moral press reportage about assaults on women. The scholar Robin Barrow has noted how newspapers of the 1860s and 1870s highlighted sexual violence on trains due to this concern about female freedom, with the railways being seen not only as a "hybrid public and private space" but also a means by which women could more easily access other public spaces. In the 1890s, a man was charged with grabbing women who were exiting Lime Street station in Liverpool and forcibly kissing them – highlighting to readers that not only were the railways dangerous places for women, but so too were their entrances and exits onto the public street.

Various environments, from railways to city centres, had typically been viewed as the territory of men. However, the late Victorian era saw many urban centres become centres for shopping and pleasure. More women were attracted to them, in order to shop, socialise and, of course, work. The growing empowerment of middle-class women in particular meant that they felt increasingly able to venture into city centres to shop. This could lead to street harassment, but also, as the historian Judith Walkovitz has explored, to women feeling better able to articulate their experiences, arguing that they had the right to travel through public spaces without fear of assault.

Yet when out in male-dominated public spaces, the responsibility was placed on women to respond to unwanted attentions in a suitable manner, and publications such as the *Girl's Own Paper* offered advice as to how to go about this. One girl writing to the paper in 1886 about "young men" who had accosted her and a friend was advised that they were unsuitable acquaintances for respectable girls, but the blame was still put on them: "You should not have been rude; you should simply have walked away to your chaperone, or some married person of

"Public space has historically been a male space, designed, built and shaped by men for their own use. This can be seen in even the smallest of details in the Victorian city"

Freewheeling to freedom
Women cycle on a country lane, 1897. The public street was seen as the most dangerous place for women, who were discouraged from meeting outside alone

MARY EVANS

your acquaintance." A woman was not safe in the public space even with a friend; she needed an appropriate chaperone, and should always remember to be polite to men, regardless of how they behaved towards her.

However, there were some spaces where Victorian women could meet each other, such as tearooms and shops; they were regarded as far safer for women than the public street, where chaperones were still advisable. In 1887, several letters appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* debating the "question of ladies walking without an escort in the London streets". During this debate, one male writer asked: "Is it possible to prevent men from following women and staring at them? Yes, by locking them up…" It was the women he suggested locking up, not the men who followed them.

Making safer spaces

Over the past few centuries, one fact has remained the same. The number of assault cases against women that either reach court, or are successfully prosecuted, remains small, despite an increase in the number of trial committals for sexual assault over the second half of the 19th century. The historian Carolyn Conley's research into Kent magistrates' courts in the latter half of the 19th century suggests that the conviction rate in rape trials was substantially lower than that of trials for other felonies, at around 40 per cent, and recent research shows that in 2019–20, less than 4 per cent of reported rape cases in England and Wales led to a court case. In addition, there have always been further, unreported, offences. This means the historical records of violence against women, whether in private or public spaces, can never represent the true number of offences that were actually committed.

> **"One male writer asked: 'Is it possible to prevent men from following women and staring at them? Yes, by locking them up…' It was the women he wanted to imprison"**

In the aftermath of Sarah Everard's death, the government vowed to "protect" women, a comment that implied women are still incapable of occupying public space without being looked after by others. Although measures being considered to make parks and neighbourhoods safer – including better lighting and CCTV – are welcome, these will not change male behaviour.

In the 19th century, women were seen as being subject to the natural and uncontrollable passions of men: they were viewed as passive recipients of this "natural" male behaviour, rather than the focus being on changing men's conduct and making spaces safer for women to be in. *The Pall Mall Gazette*'s letter writer, in a similar vein, regarded harassment as being an inherent part of normal male behaviour and something women should accept if they wanted to utilise the public streets.

There are parallels with modern society. A Swedish study noted that sexual comments create a cultural atmosphere where unwanted attention from men becomes accepted as a "normal" part of being in public spaces. Meanwhile, the UN has recognised that simply the fear of verbal or physical abuse results in the reduction of female freedom of movement. Women have the right to use space in the same way as men, and should feel safe in doing so, but how this can be achieved remains the subject of debate. In some ways, little has changed since Victorian times. H

Nell Darby is a historian who specialises in gender and crime. Her most recent book is *Sister Sleuths: Female Detectives in Britain* (Pen & Sword History, 2021)

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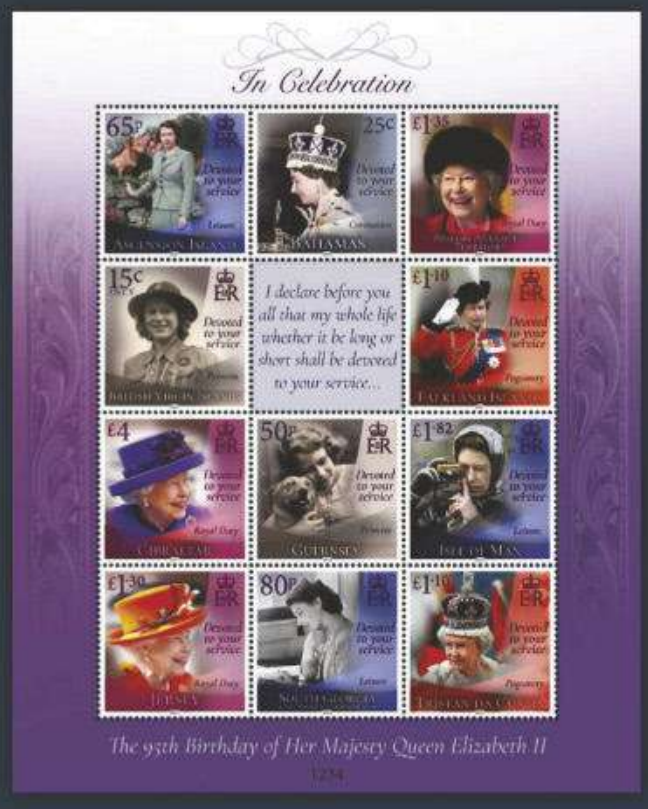
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I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service...
The 95th Birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

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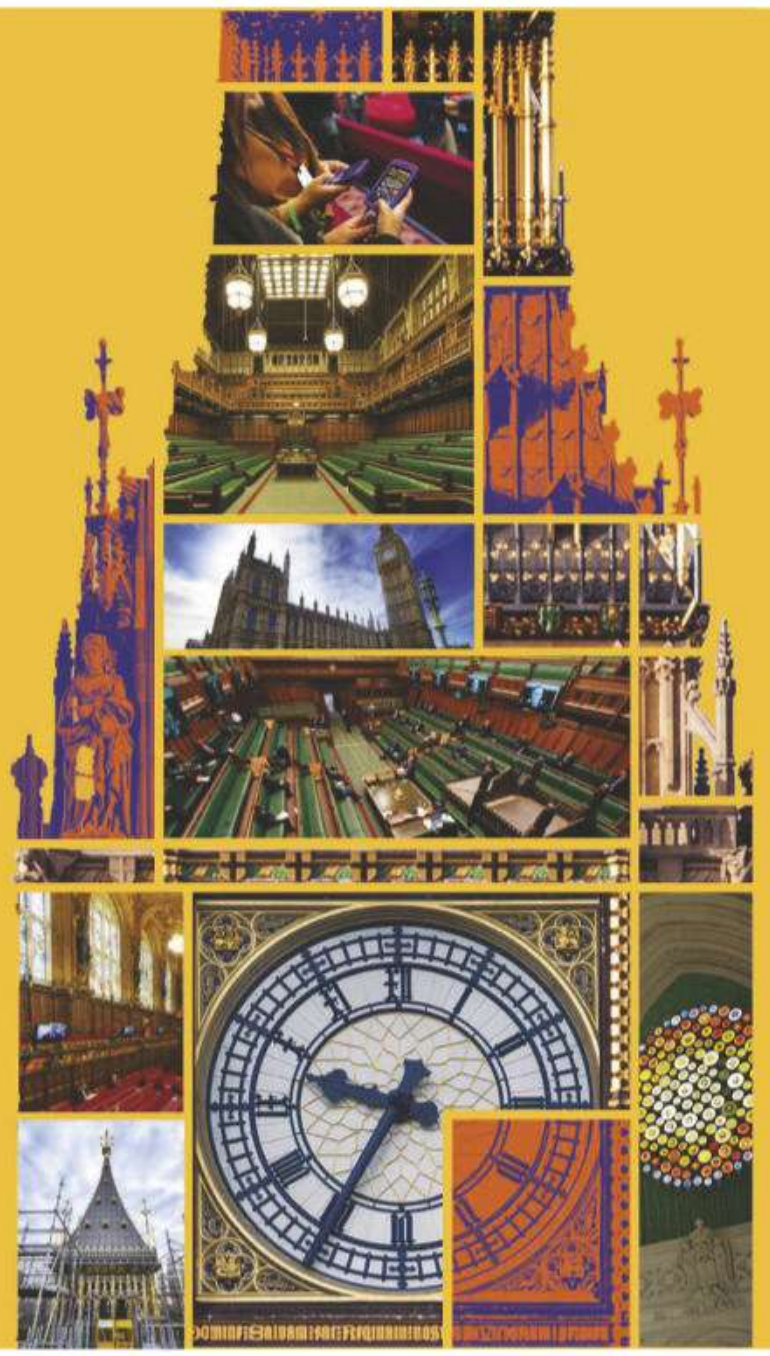


MICHAEL WOOD ON...
GLASTONBURY'S ANCIENT CHURCHES

"For the historian Glastonbury is a conundrum, full of invented stories"

It's almost that time of year when fans of Glastonbury Festival would normally be airing sleeping bags and checking the camping stove. We've been going for years and are feeling especially sad that it's off for a second year running. And it's not just the festival. It's always great to return to the "Summer Land", as medieval poets etymologised Somerset. Of all the mythic landscapes of the British Isles, surely this is the most resonant – King Arthur and Avalon, the Holy Grail, Joseph of Arimathea, Blake's *Jerusalem*. From the hill above the Pyramid stage, the Tor with its mysterious manmade striations rises like a magic mountain – beckoning.

In the town are shops called the Goddess and the Green Man, Chakralabra and Man, Myth and Magik. The shelves of the Speaking Tree book shop leave you in no doubt that the mythic past is in some sense real, and can still be touched.

For the historian though, Glastonbury is a conundrum. The great medievalist Ferdinand Lot accused the abbey's monks of running "a factory of fraud". And indeed their most famous stories – Arthur, the Grail, Joseph – were invented in the 12th and 13th centuries. For real history, until recently all we knew for sure was that the West Saxon king Ine built a church here in the late seventh century, on the site of the abbey. But now, remarkably, archaeologists believe they have found traces of a fifth-century monastic settlement. So there *was* a shrine there before the Anglo-Saxons.

The legend first surfaces soon after 900, as is later recorded in the *Life of St Dunstan*. The shrine lay on a "royal island of wide extent" and thronged with pilgrims. Its origins, we are told, lay in the mists of time, when "the first Christian converts found an ancient church… constructed by no human skill, but prepared by heaven for the salvation of mankind". This has been seen as no more than a fairy tale referring to the first Christian missionaries who came to Britain in the second century AD – a well-known story in ninth-century England.

However, whatever its date, the famous "ancient church", built of wood, was real, surviving until a fire in 1184. The text continues: "To this they added a second church or oratorium built of stone, and the bishops dedicated it to Christ and his Apostle Peter." This has always been taken to mean the church of King Ine. But that's not what the *Life* says. It clearly refers to the first Christians who discovered the wooden church. The stone church too was built before the Anglo-Saxons.

So what was this stone oratorium? The word is frequently used to describe a small, freestanding structure, sometimes attached to a church. Sometimes it specifically describes a square building reusing a Roman mausoleum, like several early Christian churches in the west of Britain.

Recently, a team at Reading University examined the notes from earlier excavations at Glastonbury Abbey. Their fascinating report establishes that there was a sunken crypt or "hypogeum" over which the later West Saxon church was constructed. The date is uncertain – it could be seventh century; it could be late Roman. Might this be the "oratorium built of stone", constructed before the coming of the Anglo-Saxons, that the text mentions?

If so, new vistas open up for Glastonbury: a late Roman Christian shrine at a holy well below the Tor – which perhaps was an ancient pilgrimage site on the borders of the Celtic Dubunni and Durotriges tribes; a holy mountain with (as its excavator Philip Rahtz suggested) a prehistoric maze cut into its slopes?

Now I know, you will say I am letting the Glastonbury vibe get to me. I'm not suggesting the boy Jesus came here with Joseph, as the legend says – nor that Glastonbury is the oldest Christian shrine in Britain, another popular myth. But it may go much farther back than we ever suspected.

Worth a thought perhaps, when you next see Coldplay or Dolly Parton on the Pyramid stage, when Glastonbury Festival finally returns. For after all, the festival celebrates the past as well as the present. H

For more on Anglo-Saxon Christianity, turn to our cover feature on page 22

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series and his latest book is *The Story of China* (Simon & Schuster, 2020). His twitter handle is @mayavision

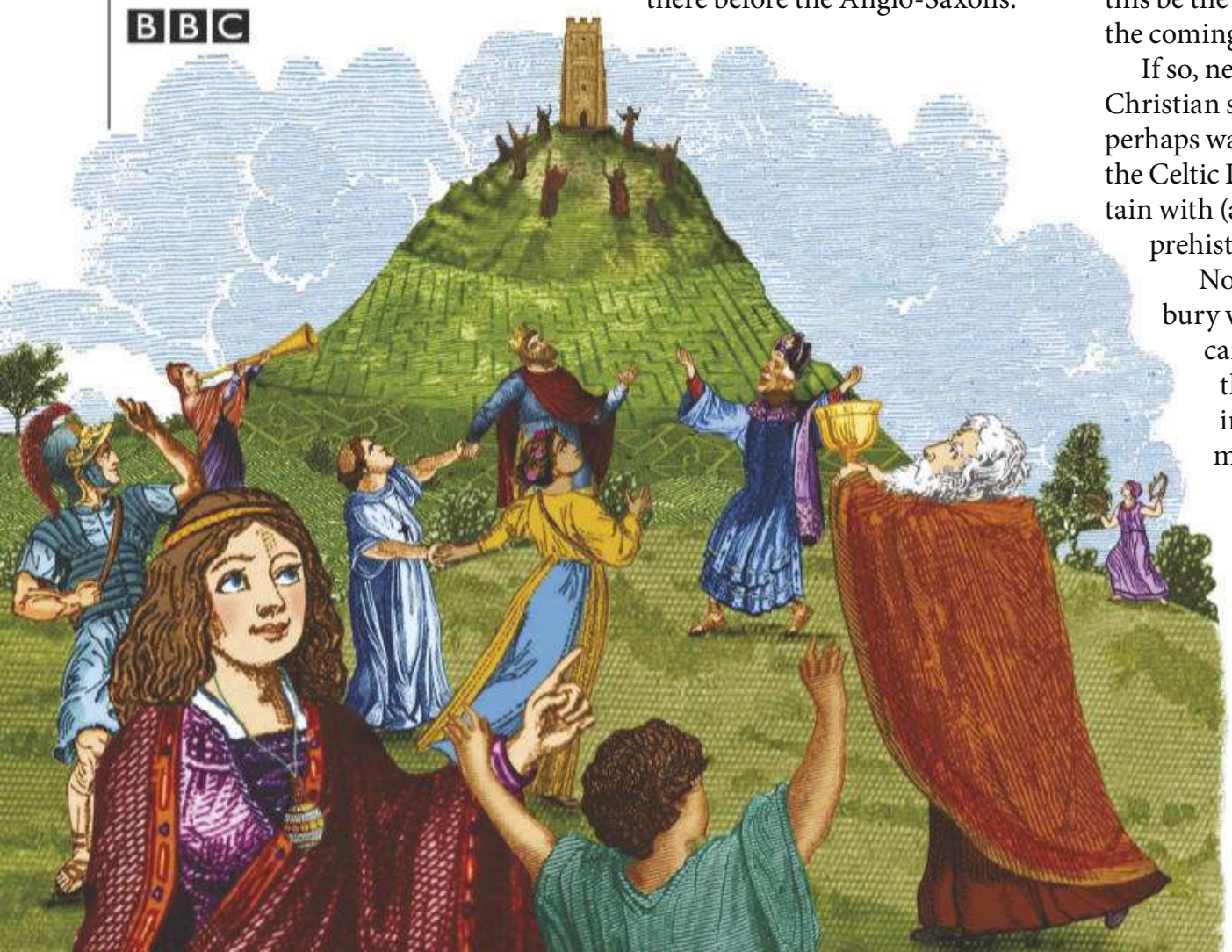


ILLUSTRATION BY **FEMKE DE JONG**

ANNIVERSARIES

DOMINIC SANDBROOK highlights events that took place in June in history

21 JUNE 1529

Catherine of Aragon causes a courtroom sensation

Henry VIII's first wife makes an impassioned plea to save her marriage

On 21 June 1529, London awoke with a buzz of anticipation. For weeks all the talk had been about the hearing into Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon. The king was seeking an annulment, but Catherine was putting up a fight. As the clerks arrived at Blackfriars, a crowd was waiting outside the chamber, pushing and shoving to get one of the precious places.

When the court resumed that morning, Henry spoke first, insisting that he merely needed to know if their marriage was legal. But then came Catherine's turn. Calmly she rose from her seat and walked towards Henry's throne. And there, she fell to her knees.

"Sir," she implored, "I beseech you for all the loves there hath been between us, and for the love of God, let me have justice. Take of me some pity and compassion." The spectators sat in silence, listening to the queen pleading on her knees in her deep Spanish accent. "I take God and all the world," she said, "to witness that I have been to you a true, humble and obedient wife, ever comfortable to your will and pleasure."

For 20 years they had been husband and wife. She knew it. He knew it. "I take God to be my judge," Catherine concluded. "And whether it be true or no, I put it to your conscience."

Then she turned and walked out of the chamber. Behind her, Henry stood motionless, his face like thunder.

Catherine begs Henry to reconsider his plans to annul their marriage in a 19th-century painting

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN

Turgut Reis was hit by splinters from a cannonball, as shown in this 1867 painting, and died within a week

17 JUNE 1565

A few weeks into the Ottoman siege of Malta, the swash-buckling Turkish corsair Turgut Reis – better known as Dragut – is **hit by splinters from a cannonball**, which thuds into the ground a few feet away. For six days he fights for life, before finally succumbing to his wounds.

Children gather at the memorial to the pupils of Upper North Street School, east London, who were killed in a daylight air raid in 1917. The attack prompted outrage among the area's residents

13 JUNE 1917

German bombs smash into a Poplar school

The surprise daylight attack brings horror to east London

It was almost lunchtime at Upper North Street School in Poplar, east London, and the children were hard at work. The older girls were on the top floor, having a singing lesson. The older boys were on the first floor, battling with their maths. The infants were on the ground floor. Most were between four and six years old.

When the German bomber appeared overhead, there was no time to react. The bomb punched through the roof, killing a 13-year-old girl. It ploughed through the floor to the next level, mortally wounding a 12-year-old boy. Finally it crashed into the infants' classroom, where it exploded.

Sixteen infants were killed and several dozen injured. The survivors huddled sobbing in the playground, while the teachers went to search the building. It was a horrific scene, breaking the hearts of all who saw it.

The next day the school opened, as usual. As the headmaster read the register, there was a silence after every missing name. By the time he had finished, tears were running down his cheeks.

The kaiser's commanders believed that by bringing death to the streets of London, they would break Britain's spirit and end the war. But they were wrong.

In the East End, the bombing unleashed a wave of anger. When a reporter visited Upper North Street School, he spotted the local Liberal MP, Alfred Yeo, with his Conservative rival, Captain Wilfrid Allen. Both were "white with anger" at the Germans.

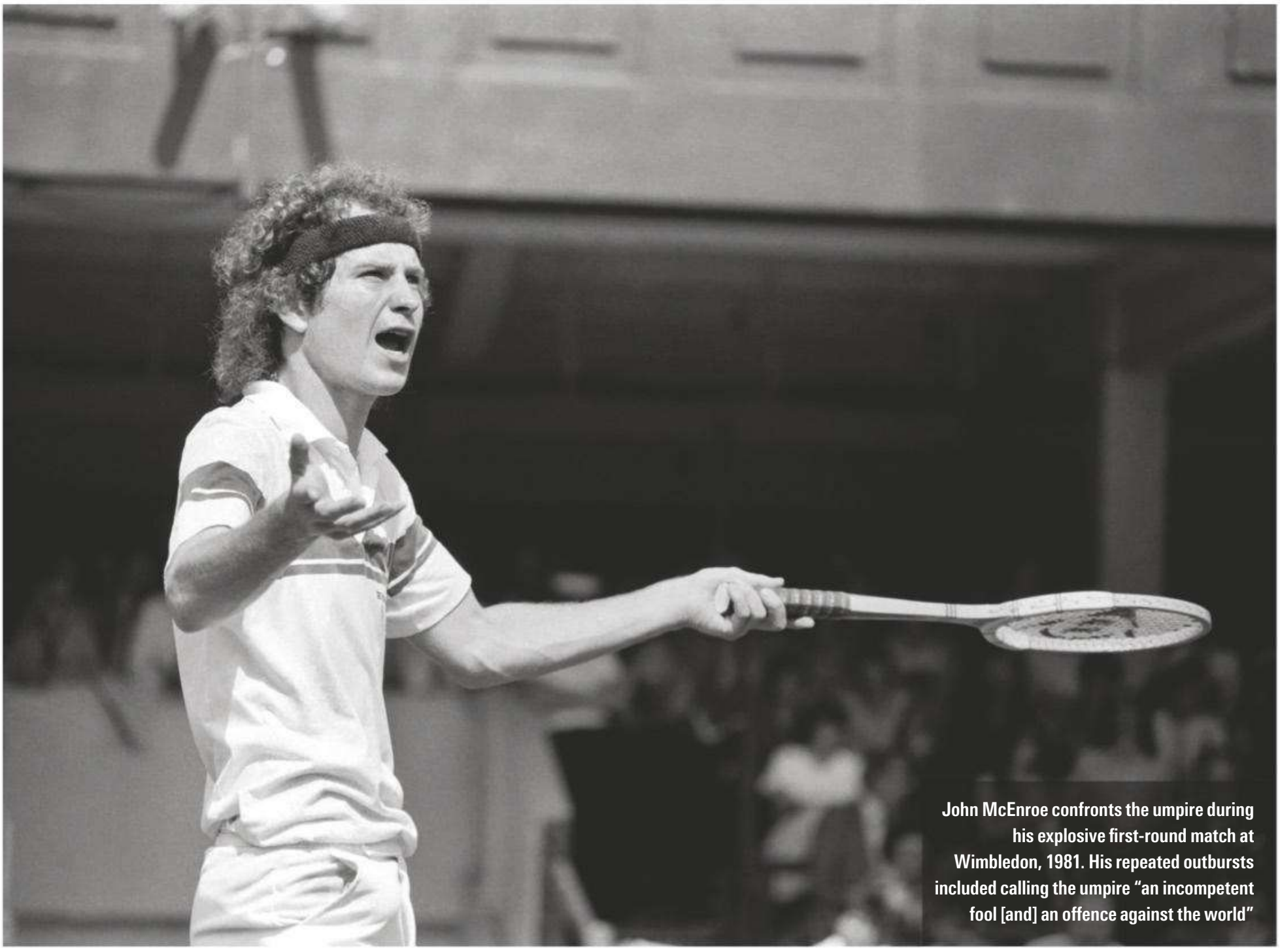
"What's the use of playing about like this?" Yeo said. "In God's name, let us have an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. We must have reprisals."

Allen agreed: "Bomb their open towns, as they are bombing ours. Kill their civilians, as they are killing ours. Let their women and children suffer… It is the only way to bring the German people to their senses."

Carrie Nation, c1900s. The temperance campaigner vandalised American saloons with her hatchet

5 JUNE 1900

After praying for advice, the anti-alcohol campaigner Carrie Nation receives a message from God telling her to **smash up saloons** in Kiowa, Kansas. When she does so two days later, a tornado strikes, which she sees as divine approval.



John McEnroe confronts the umpire during his explosive first-round match at Wimbledon, 1981. His repeated outbursts included calling the umpire "an incompetent fool [and] an offence against the world"

22 JUNE 1981

John McEnroe erupts at Wimbledon

The tennis star's meltdown leaves spectators in shock

John McEnroe entered the 1981 Wimbledon championships as one of the most famous sportsmen in the world. The year before, aged just 21, he had lost an epic final to Björn Borg. With his brash, swashbuckling style, McEnroe was already a firm favourite with younger fans, earning the nickname "Superbrat". Nobody, though, could have expected what came next.

McEnroe was widely expected to cruise to victory in the opening round against his fellow American Tom Gullikson – as indeed he did. But the two men had only been on court for two games when, living up to his billing, Superbrat lost his temper in spectacular fashion.

When McEnroe's serve – an ace, he thought – was ruled out by the chair umpire, his passion boiled over. "Chalk came up all over the place," he burst out. "You can't be serious, man. You cannot be serious! That ball is on the line. Chalk flew up. It was clearly in. How can you possibly call that out?"

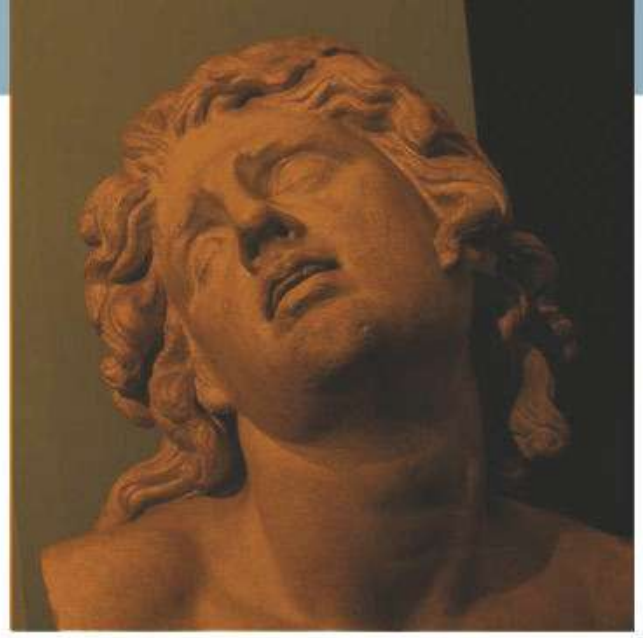
At that there were gasps from the crowd. "Everybody knows it's in in the whole stadium, and you call it out?" McEnroe screamed. "You guys are the absolute pits of the world, you know that?"

The umpire gave him a warning. But McEnroe was not deterred. A few moments later, having been reprimanded for smashing his racquet into the ground, he lost his temper again. "You are an incompetent fool, an offence against the world!" he shouted, as the umpire docked him a point.

The tantrum made headlines across the world – a symptom, some said, of a younger generation that had lost all decency. "Disgrace of Superbrat," screamed the front page of the next day's *Daily Express*, while the paper's star columnist Jean Rook declared McEnroe was as "brattish, brutish, bloody-minded as his red headband".

But the young American had the last laugh. He won the match, and two weeks later he won his first Wimbledon championship, too.

GETTY IMAGES



This Roman bust depicts a dying Alexander the Great. He may have succumbed to malaria

11 JUNE 323 BC

Alexander the Great dies

The mighty conqueror goes out with a whimper

In the ancient city of Babylon, the most celebrated conqueror in world history lay drenched in sweat. For more than a week Alexander of Macedon had been confined to his bed. Some said he had been poisoned, though malaria may be a more plausible explanation.

The morning of 11 June dawned unnaturally dark, as if the sun was veiled in mourning. There were soldiers everywhere, their hands on their sword hilts. Most people stayed inside, and those who ventured out carried no lamps. A blanket of fear lay over the city. The people of Babylon were waiting for the inevitable.

That afternoon, Alexander's closest companions gathered around his bedside. Many of them were crying. His face was grey, his breathing laboured. But he opened his eyes and managed to speak. He wanted to be buried in the Temple of Zeus, in the house of his father.

He pulled the ring from his finger and handed it to his cavalry commander, Perdiccas. His friends moved closer. To whom, they asked, was he leaving the kingdom?

Hoarsely Alexander whispered: "To the strongest." With that, his head fell back, and he closed his eyes. A few moments later, he gave a long, shuddering breath, and then there was silence.

That evening, a Babylonian scribe sat over his astronomical diary. He pushed his stylus into the clay tablet and wrote: "The king died. Clouds." H

Dominic Sandbrook co-presents the weekly podcast *The Rest Is History* with historian Tom Holland, available on all platforms

BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES

WHY WE SHOULD REMEMBER...

Richard Nixon declares a **war on drugs** that continues to rage today

BY **BENJAMIN T SMITH**

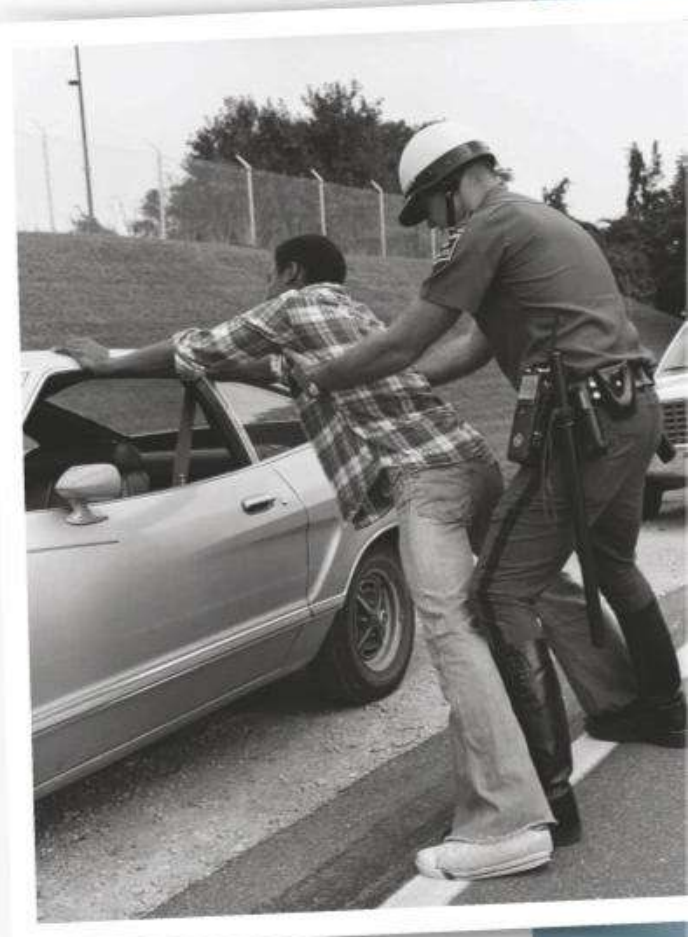
Fifty years ago, on 17 June 1971, President Richard Nixon declared to the Washington press core that America had a new enemy. For a change it wasn't the Soviet Union, or China, or even communism more generally: it was narcotics. "America's public enemy number one is drug abuse," Nixon claimed. To fight it, it was necessary "to wage a new, all-out offensive". Within days, US newspapers took up the metaphor. The United States was now engaged in a "war on drugs".

Using martial metaphors to describe counter-narcotic efforts was nothing new. Harry Anslinger, America's long-time drug tsar, had claimed that opium poppy fields held "as much potential disaster as an atom bomb". And during the early years of the Cold War, he portrayed his agency, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN), as the counter-narcotics version of the CIA.

"The counter-narcotics force were presented as drug super-cops, stalking the underworld"

Yet Nixon's speech marked the beginning of a new era of drug policy. Before 1971, American drug laws had been harsh and oppressive, and they had been used to unfairly target minorities. (Witness the FBN's vicious hounding of jazz singer Billie Holiday.) But these laws were also rarely applied. Anslinger presented the FBN as drug super-cops, stalking the drug underworld both at home and abroad. In reality, the organisation was seriously underpowered and chronically corrupt. And those jailed for drug crimes every year rarely reached into the tens of thousands.

Nixon's announcement sparked a new aggression and intensity in drug policing. It was spearheaded by a new agency – the Drug Enforcement Administration or DEA, which was 10 times the size of the old FBN. It was launched abroad in drug-producing countries such as Jamaica, Mexico and Colombia, where DEA agents and local military forces descended on drug-growing zones, rounded up suspected traffickers and then hurled them in jail. This aggression was pursued at home, too, as police forces started to use increasingly stringent drug laws to put away non-violent drug offenders for decades.

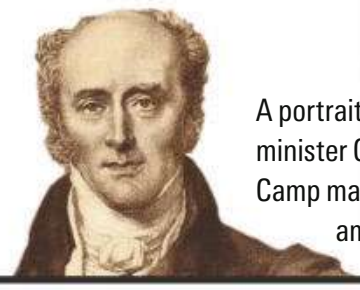


A policeman searches an African-American man, 1970s. The war on drugs continues to disproportionately affect African-Americans today, writes Benjamin T Smith

It is a policy that continues to this day, and it is one that still marks the United States. Refined by Nixon's successors, the war on drugs is the root cause of what we now term "mass incarceration". Today there are at least 1.8 million prisoners in the United States. Most are on small-scale narcotics charges. And they are disproportionately African-American. H

Benjamin T Smith is a professor of Latin American history at the University of Warwick. His new book, *The Dope: The Real History of the Mexican Drug Trade*, will be out in June 2021 from Penguin/Ebury

LETTERS



A portrait of 19th-century prime minister Charles Grey. Reader Michael Camp makes the case for his inclusion among the UK's finest PMs

LETTER OF THE MONTH

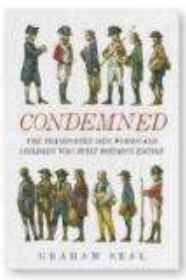
Art attack

I enjoyed your article about the Festival of Britain (May) and was inspired to do an online search into the whereabouts of the artworks once the festival closed.

I was surprised to discover that the vast majority of these historic artefacts were destroyed, including the immense and imposing *Islanders* sculpture by Siegfried Charoux, which was smashed to pieces, and the Dome of Discovery and Skylon, which were both scrapped and their aluminium melted down. *The Sunbathers* (below), created by Hungarian artist Peter Laszlo Peri, was rediscovered lying neglected in a hotel garden; thankfully, it has been restored and displayed close to where it was originally placed in 1951.

One theory as to why these precious artefacts were so unceremoniously disposed of in such haste was that Winston Churchill viewed the whole festival as a celebration of socialism by the preceding Labour government.

It got me thinking about what other postwar art and buildings are now lost forever due to the short-sighted or political views of the people in charge of them at the time. I wondered if your readers could suggest any?
Richard Sandford, Essex



We reward the *Letter of the Month* writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is **Condemned** by Graham Seal. You can read our review of the book on page 92

Peter Laszlo Peri's *The Sunbathers*, which was lost for decades after being featured at the 1951 Festival of Britain. It's now on display at London's Waterloo station

ALAMY

Prime suspect

Andrew Roberts' article on Margaret Thatcher (*Who Is Britain's Greatest Prime Minister?*, April) was an attempt to glorify her premiership. He chose to ignore her attacks on families, trade unions, local communities, education, health and social services. She established an environment where city dealers made fortunes within her extreme free market doctrine, while the working class suffered huge cuts in their incomes and standards of living. She also started the hugely damaging selling of council houses.

Thatcher did indeed leave a legacy: poor housing availability and standards, and private companies running railways, water boards, electricity and gas companies for profit and not for the benefit of the country.
Andrew Rollason, Carmarthenshire

Premier league

Thank you for the scan through some of our greatest prime ministers (April). What about Charles Grey? Admittedly he served for less than four years (1830–34), but those years saw some great achievements. At the top of the list comes what must be regarded as the most consequential extension of the franchise to that date through the Great Reform Act of 1832. After that came the abolition of slavery [in the British empire] and reform of the employment of children. Although Grey resigned over Ireland (like so many!) he laid the foundations for further Whig reforms through the 1830s.
The Rev Michael Camp, Salisbury

Rewriting wrongs

I was interested to read about Arthur Conan Doyle's crucial role in getting justice for George Edalji (*Books Interview*, April). This was not the only wrongful conviction that Conan Doyle fought to overturn. He was determined to secure the release from prison of Oscar Slater, who had served more than 18 years for the murder of an 82-year-old woman in Glasgow in 1908.

The Oscar Slater case is widely regarded as Scotland's most shameful miscarriage of justice. Despite the efforts over the years of many writers and academics, the identity of the real murderer of Marion Gilchrist remains a mystery to this day.
David Petrie, Glasgow

Suspicious minds

I would challenge the impression given by Nathen Amin in *The Greatest Pretender* (May) that all challenges to the Tudor dynasty were over with the accession of Henry VIII. Henry always felt threatened by anyone with Plantagenet blood, resulting in the executions of Edmund de la Pole in 1513, the Duke of Buckingham in 1521 and Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury as late as 1541, to name but three.

Henry was very relieved when Richard de la Pole was killed in the battle of Pavia in 1525. Later he was very suspicious of the Poles (Margaret's children) and the Courtenays (descendants of Edward IV's daughter Catherine) and acted against them. Whether he was paranoid or not, Henry felt insecure all his reign and believed there were pretenders in wait. Much blood and suffering resulted from this.
Susan Martin, Walsall

School dinner horrors

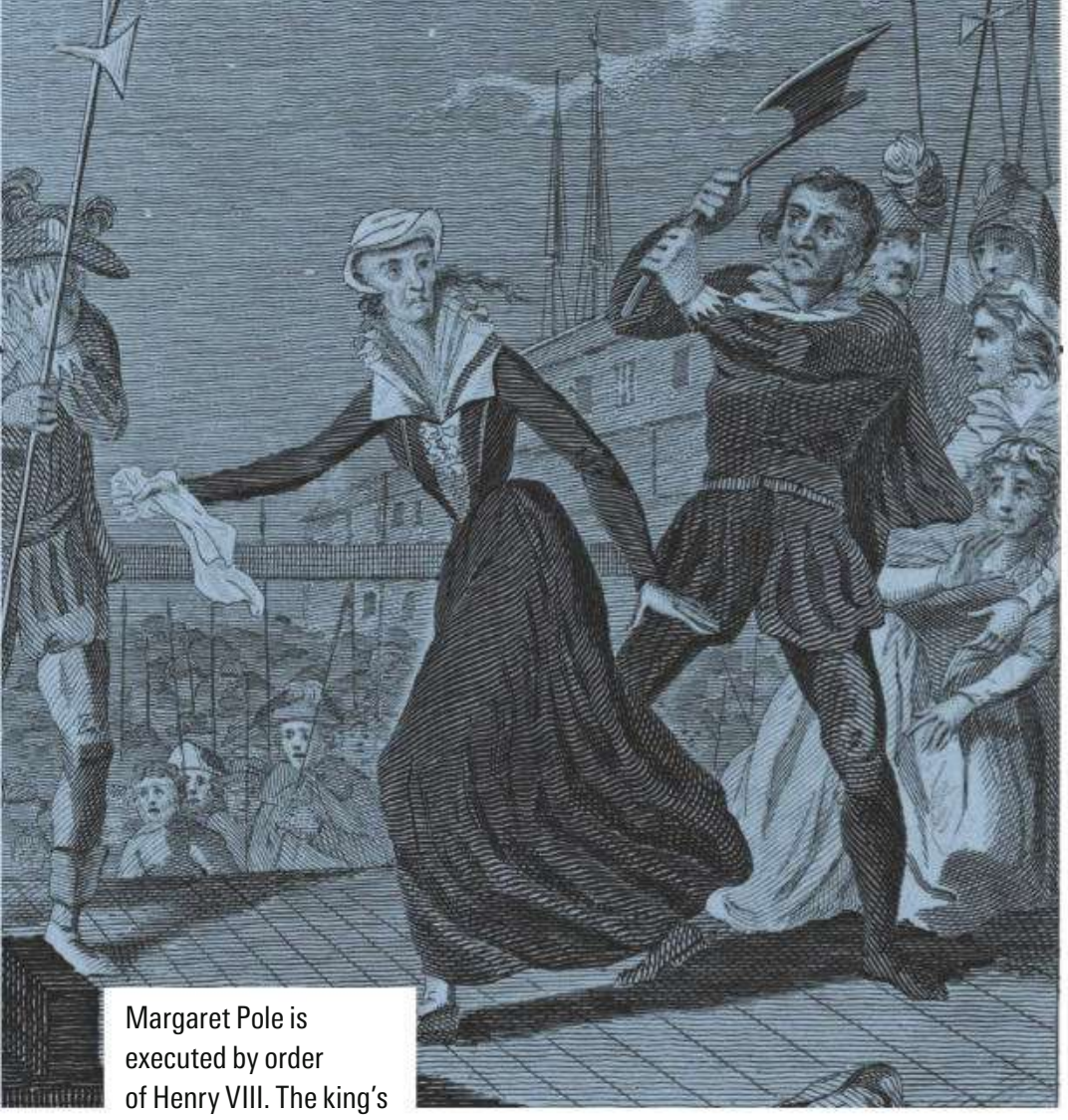
Annie Gray's account of the history of school meals (*Behind the News*, April) is inaccurate in one respect. She states that "by 1968 only children who could go home for lunch avoided school dinners".

Not so. There was another alternative: packed lunches. I clearly remember changing to sandwiches after suffering school dinners for several years. I had never been a fussy eater, but the standard of meals at my Liverpool grammar school was pretty grim. There was no choice, so if a particular meal was not to your liking (cheese pie and sago puddings were my particular horrors) it was hard luck; you had to go hungry. At least with packed lunches you weren't starving by 4pm.
Ron Bibby, Southport

Fact and faith

Reading the April issue, I found myself puzzling over the letter written by David Dredge of Kent. He states that there is "scant, if not zero" evidence of a historical Jesus, suggesting that there is "no place in your factual magazine" for reference to him.

Whether or not one accepts the divinity



Margaret Pole is executed by order of Henry VIII. The king's suspicion of the Pole family suggests a continuation of the paranoia and plotting of his father's reign, says Susan Martin

ALAMY

of Jesus Christ, the records compiled in the Bible itself are surely overwhelming evidence in themselves. Should this (mystifyingly) controversial subject be examined under the same criteria as other ancient historical figures, there is considerably more evidence for the "historical Jesus" than almost any other non-aristocratic figure of this period.

Authenticated records, written many decades apart, and the writings of non-Christian historians – most notably Josephus and Tacitus – should leave even the most ardent sceptic in no doubt that Jesus lived. To discount all of this helps neither side of the argument and flies in the face of reason and credibility. To historians, and those of us whose faith is built on Jesus Christ, there is more than enough confirmation available.

Jo Wilkins, Nottingham

Time after time

The letter in the May magazine from JD Abell about Majorcan clocks striking twice reminds me that, in rural France, many church clocks strike the hours twice in succession. Once, upon enquiring why this was so, I was told that the clock chimed once for man, and once for God.

Chris Ward, Sheffield

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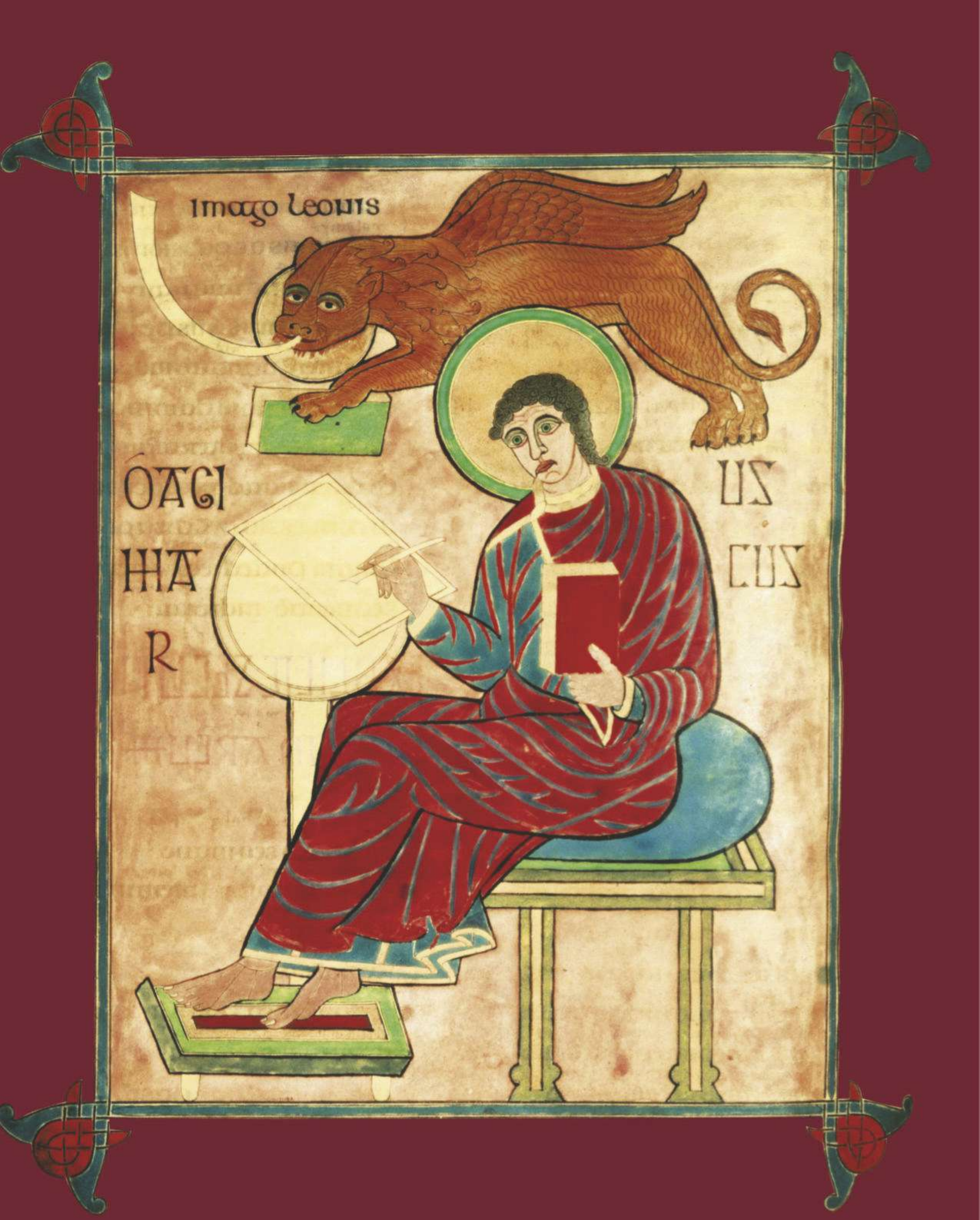
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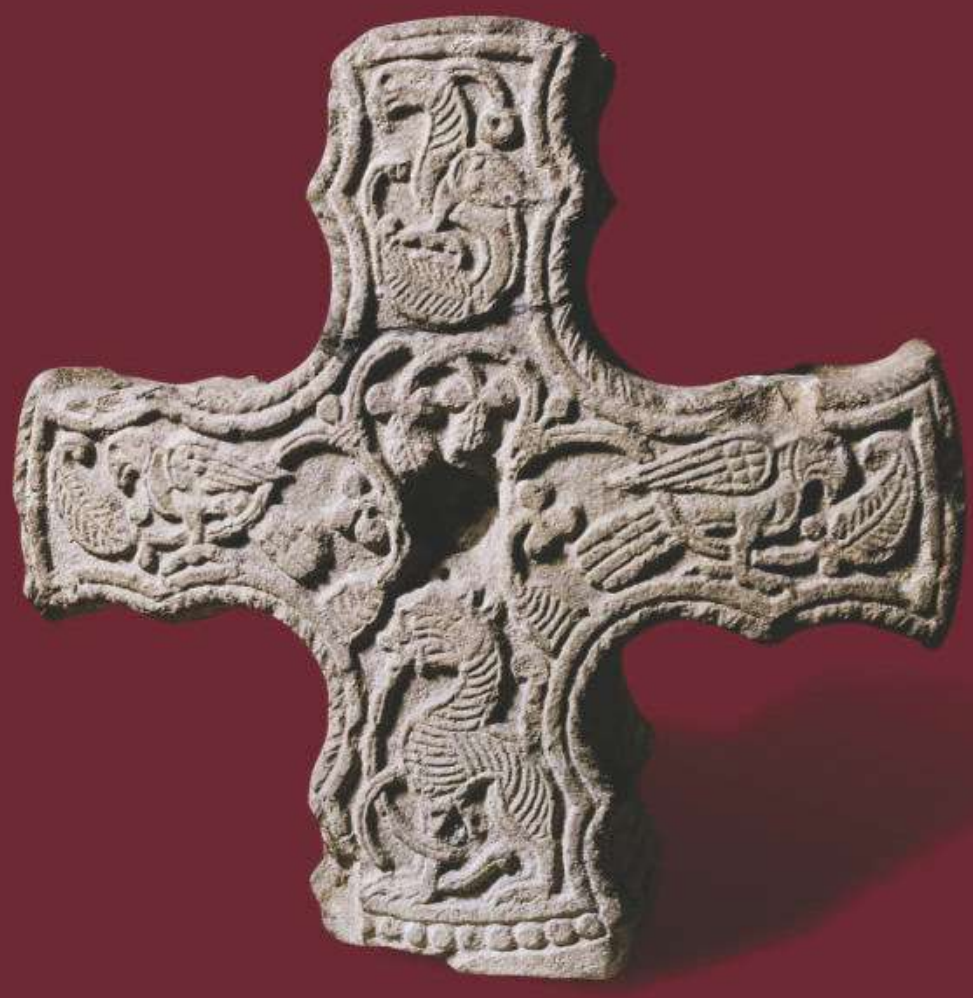

The coming of the cross
(at the point of a sword)

Although the Anglo-Saxons' adoption of Christianity has often been labelled as peaceful, in reality many were swayed by the threat of aggression. **Marc Morris** investigates the violence that greased the wheels of conversion

BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Spilling blood

LEFT: **St Mark sits below his symbol, a winged lion, in a page from the eighth-century Lindisfarne Gospels.**
ABOVE: **An Anglo-Saxon cross head dating from 825–50. The conversion of Anglo-Saxon England to Christianity was more brutal than we realise, says Marc Morris**

The story of how the Anglo-Saxons came to be converted to Christianity begins in Rome, at some point towards the end of the sixth century. A monk named Gregory (who in 590 became Pope Gregory I) was walking through the market when he noticed some unusual-looking boys being sold as slaves. Struck by their beauty, he asked where they were from and was told they were Angles, prompting a famous pun. "Good", he reportedly replied. "They have the face of *angels*, and such men should be the fellow heirs of angels in heaven."

Such at least was the tale told by the Venerable Bede, writing around 150 years after these events, who indicated he didn't set very much store in its credibility. But, like all good legends, it was grounded in reality. Six years into his pontificate, Gregory dispatched a mission to convert the Anglo-Saxons, headed by a monk named Augustine. Arriving in 597, Augustine was greeted by the king of Kent, Æthelberht, who was extremely hospitable. The king soon converted, along with his people, and in the decades that followed, the rulers and peoples of the various other kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England followed suit. By 686, well within a century of Augustine's arrival, all the former pagan polities had become Christian.

As you might expect, the process of bringing heathens to the light of heaven is presented to us in our earliest sources as essentially a benign and beneficial one. The heroes of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* are holy men, such as St Augustine or the Northumbrian St Cuthbert,

Leading the way An image of Pope Gregory I dictating to a scribe. In 596 he dispatched a mission to convert the Anglo-Saxons

and the good kings like Æthelberht who listened attentively and facilitated Christianity's spread. Æthelberht, said Bede, "compelled no one to accept Christianity", and this point was seized upon by later historians as clear evidence that the whole conversion process was voluntary. "We nowhere read of any of those persecutions at the point of sword," said the Victorian scholar Edward Freeman, "which disgraced the proselytising zeal of the Frankish and Scandinavian apostles of the faith."

But this was nonsense. The Anglo-Saxons had been pagan since time immemorial, long before they had started settling in eastern Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries. The fact that four of the days of the week in modern English are named after their heathen gods (Tiw, Woden, Thunor and Frig) indicates that their ancient ancestral beliefs were deeply embedded and therefore cannot have been lightly eradicated. Freeman's faith in English exceptionalism apparently blinded him to the occasions where our sources point to exactly the kind of violence he insisted had only happened in other countries, not in dear old England.

Chased off by pagans

St Augustine's mission soon spread from Kent to the neighbouring kingdoms of Essex and East Anglia. And it also reached the far north when King Æthelberht's daughter, Æthelburh, was married to King Eadwine of Northumbria, bringing with her a priest, Paulinus, who became the first bishop of York. But the Roman mission ran into difficulties when the first generation of convert kings died. The bishops of London and Rochester were chased from their dioceses by new pagan rulers, and both the queen of Northumbria and the bishop of York were forced to flee when King Eadwine was killed in battle.

In the north, however, Christianity was swiftly re-established by missionaries who hailed from a different direction. Ireland had embraced the new faith in the fifth and sixth centuries, and the new king of Northumbria, Oswald, having grown up in Irish exile, had been converted by Irish monks on the island of Iona. Soon after his accession, Oswald established some of these monks on the island of Lindisfarne, close to his royal seat at Bamburgh. In the generation that followed, missionaries from Lindisfarne not only re-evangelised Northumbria, but they also resumed the conversion of Essex and eventually won over the rulers of the powerful midland kingdom of Mercia.

The two churches, Roman and Irish, were quite different in style. While contemplative

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TIMELINE The quest to convert the Anglo-Saxons

596
Pope Gregory the Great **dispatches St Augustine** from Rome to convert the Anglo-Saxons. Augustine arrives the following year and soon **converts King Æthelberht of Kent**.

616
Æthelberht dies, and a pagan reaction follows in both Kent and Essex, with the bishops of London and Rochester **chased from their dioceses by new pagan rulers**.

627
King Eadwine of Northumbria is baptised by Paulinus, who becomes the first bishop of York, but Eadwine dies in battle six years later.

635
King Oswald of Northumbria (pictured below) founds an abbey on Lindisfarne with Irish monks from the island of Iona. The first abbot is St Aidan.

655
Penda, the last pagan king of Mercia, dies in battle, and **the conversion of the midland kingdom begins** in earnest. Monks from Lindisfarne also re-evangelise Essex.

St Augustine and King Æthelberht, depicted in a 12th-century image

Irish monks liked to base themselves on off-shore islands, their Roman counterparts preferred their seats to be in ancient cities, abandoned since the days of the Roman empire. Ascetic Irish missionaries walked from place to place, whereas Romans ostentatiously rode horses. There were also differences on points of doctrine. Disagreement on how to calculate the date of Easter led to a stormy debate at Whitby in 664, during which the Northumbrian king Oswiu (the brother of Oswald) switched sides, forcing the monks of Lindisfarne to align themselves with Rome.

False perspective
A 19th-century image of St Augustine preaching to King Æthelbert. Such peaceful portrayals of conversion fail to show the whole picture, says Marc Morris

Seducing kings

But when it came to converting people, the methods of the two churches were essentially the same. The first and most important target for any missionary effort was the king. Here, perhaps, the Roman church had the edge, bringing with them the papacy's association with ancient imperial power and bearing precious gifts. In an effort to induce King Eadwine of Northumbria to convert, the pope sent him a gold-embroidered robe, along with a silver mirror and a gilded ivory comb for his queen.

However, Christians of either camp could offer other inducements to aspirational pagan rulers: the power of literacy, enabling them to record laws and grants of land, and the promise of military success against their rivals. (We hear of more than one king taking what amounted to a spiritual test drive, agreeing to convert if God granted them victory over their enemies.) Most of all, the new religion offered the irresistible guarantee of everlasting life in paradise – an idea that must have had great appeal in a world where the death of rulers by plague, assassination or dismemberment in battle was a frequent occurrence.

Some pagan kings took a spiritual test drive, agreeing to convert if God granted them victory over their enemies

Christianity was equally attractive to other members of the elite. Royal and aristocratic women, for example, embraced the new faith because it offered them an opportunity for self-determination, as the heads of monastic communities. Whitby, the monastery

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

664
The Synod of Whitby resolves the clash between the Roman and Irish missions over the dating of Easter and other discords, with victory going to Rome.

664
Plague sweeps across Britain, killing many thousands, including a number of bishops, leaving the new Anglo-Saxon church in a state of crisis.

668
Theodore of Tarsus is appointed archbishop of Canterbury by the pope. Despite his already advanced years, he brings much needed leadership over the next two decades.

681
Wilfrid (pictured below), having been expelled as bishop of Northumbria, becomes bishop of Sussex and begins a **large-scale programme of conversion** – some of it forced.

686
The Isle of Wight is conquered by Cædwalla with the blessing of Bishop Wilfrid, who obtains a quarter of the island for the church. It is the last Anglo-Saxon kingdom to convert.

The ruins of Lindisfarne priory. Its monks re-evangalised Essex

where the famous synod of 664 took place, had been founded a few years earlier by Hild, a great niece of King Eadwine of Northumbria, known to posterity as St Hilda. In her capacity as abbess of Whitby, she ruled over both its male and female residents, earning the respect of a whole generation of holy men and women. All who knew her, says Bede, "used to call her 'Mother' because of her outstanding devotion and grace".

More stick than carrot

But what of the non-elite folk? How were they induced to convert? The monasteries founded by kings and aristocrats were not closed-up affairs, and some of their residents took it upon themselves to tour the countryside, preaching and baptising. But many weeks, and maybe months, would elapse between these periodic visits, during which ordinary people had no spiritual guidance. They might erect a wooden cross at which to congregate to hear itinerant preachers, and in time it might be replaced with something more impressive, like the carved stone crosses that survive from the seventh and eighth centuries. But a system of parishes, with a priest resident in every settlement, lay hundreds of years in the future.

The gulf between the experience of the elite and that of the common folk is well illustrated by a story told by Bede. He describes how some Northumbrian monks were using rafts to move wood along the river Tyne, when a storm blew up and swept them out to sea. Their fellow monks wept, Bede tells us, but the peasants who were watching stood and jeered. Let the monks drown, the crowd declared, "for they have robbed people of their old ways of worship, and how the new worship is to be conducted, nobody knows."

This incident suggests that, when it came to the conversion of ordinary people, there was probably rather more stick than carrot. King Eorcenberht of Kent, who ruled from 640 to 664, was praised by Bede for being the first Anglo-Saxon king to order the destruction of pagan shrines across his whole kingdom and for forcing people to fast during Lent. A generation later, Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, newly arrived from Rome but originally from Cilicia (now Turkey), banned all manner of heathen customs: people burning grain to purify a house in which a corpse was resting, or mothers who placed their daughters in ovens to cure them of a fever.

A storm blew up and swept the Northumbrian monks out to sea. Their fellow monks wept, but the peasants who were watching jeered

Humble beginnings
A seventh-century Anglo-Saxon cross in a Cumbrian churchyard. Before carved stone monuments like this were erected, common folk would typically congregate at a simple wooden cross to hear an itinerant preacher

Such proscriptions, and the persistence of pagan worship in spite of them, invite us to consider the nature of the earliest conversions. In a letter from 598, Gregory I boasted that Augustine had baptised more than 10,000 people in Kent on the first Christmas after his arrival. Similarly, Bede relates that Paulinus, the first bishop of York, spent five weeks at the royal estate of Yeavering in Northumbria, baptising every day from dawn till dusk. In both cases, Bede claims these mass conversions occurred because people flocked to embrace the true faith.

But did they really flock, or were they herded? Having assured us that *it was said* Æthelberht of Kent compelled no one to accept Christianity, Bede adds that the king "nevertheless showed greater affection for believers, since they were his fellow citizens in the kingdom of heaven". With warrior kings like Æthelberht, it was always wise to remain on their affectionate side.

The belief that the rapid conversion of vast numbers of people can only have been achieved through royal compulsion is borne out by the biography of St Wilfrid, who was at various times bishop of Northumbria and the de facto bishop of Mercia and Sussex. During his time in Sussex, boasts his biographer, Wilfrid baptised thousands of pagans in a single day, "some freely, and some at the king's command".

Other episodes in Wilfrid's career demonstrate that both he and his biographer were

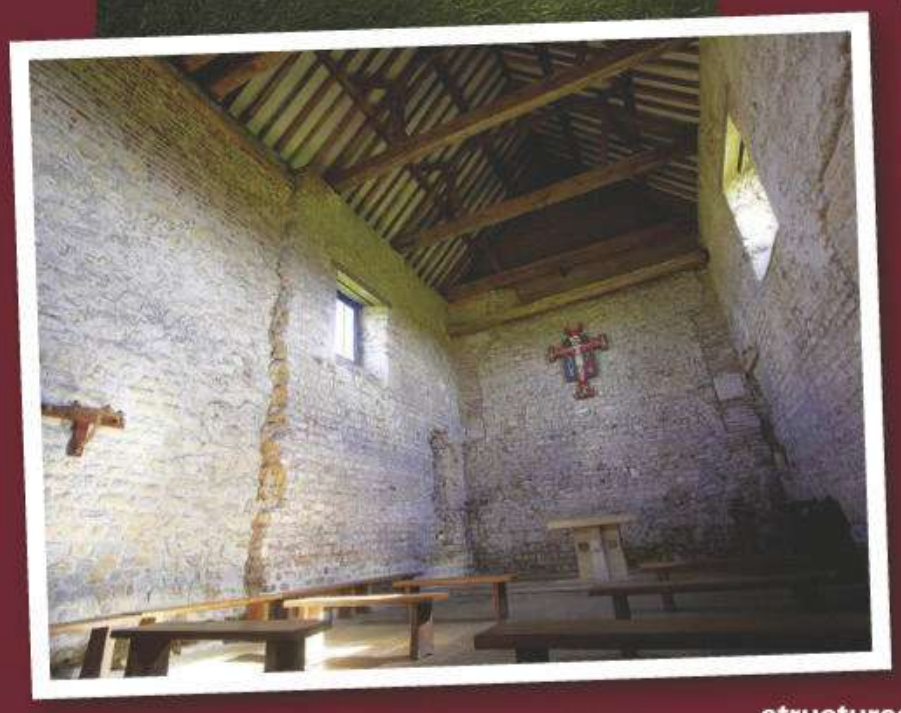
Losing face
A stone head from a Celtic pagan shrine in Gloucestershire. The Christian king Eorcenberht ordered the destruction of pagan shrines across Kent and forced people to fast during Lent

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

THE CHURCHES OF CONVERSION

As missionaries spread the word of God throughout the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, they built ever-grander places of worship

The Anglo-Saxon church of St-Peter-on-the-Wall, Essex (above, and its interior is shown below) was built with recycled Roman stones. This was a common practice in the period

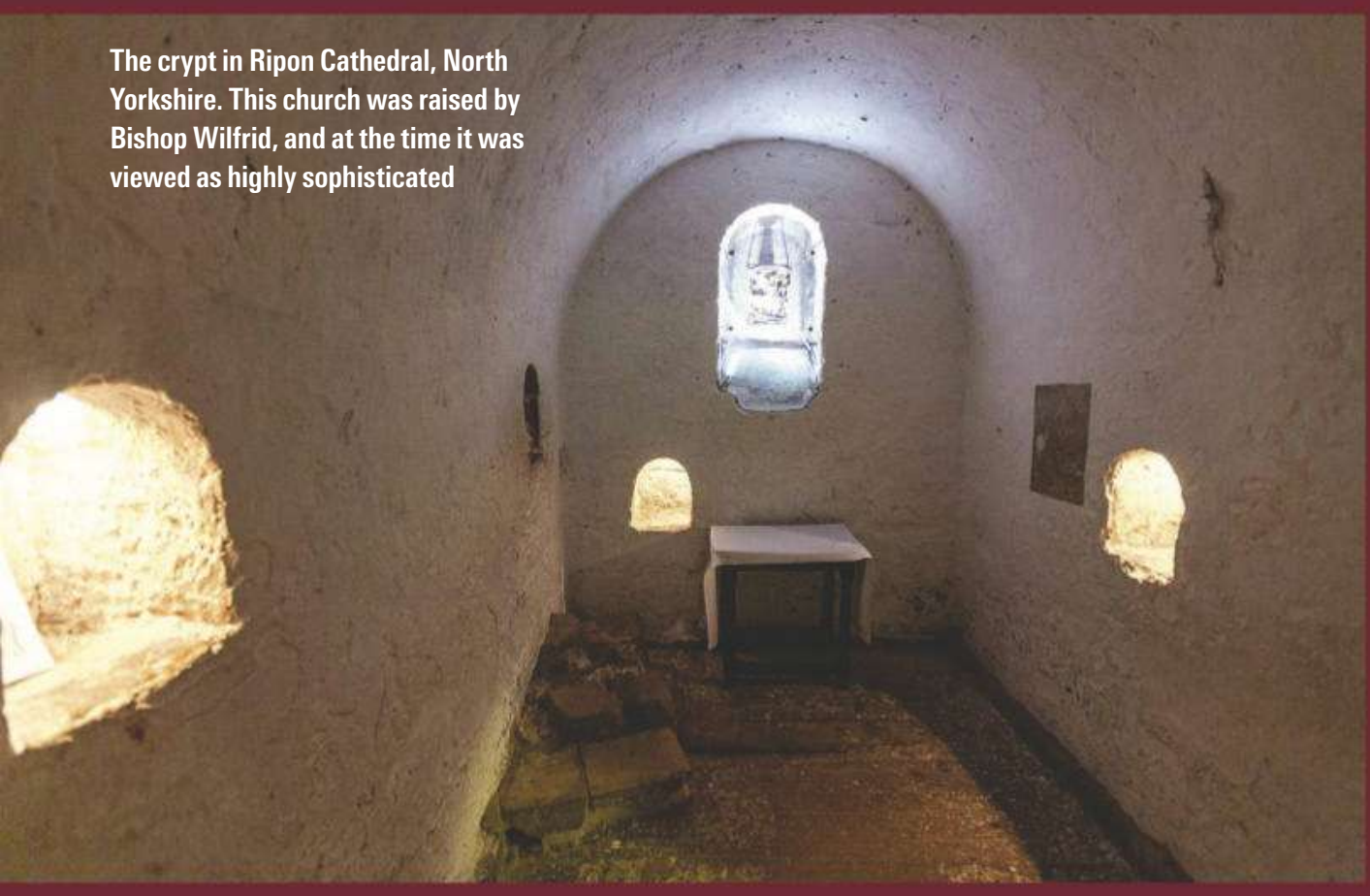


Christianity had originally been introduced to Britain as early as the third century, when the island was part of the Roman empire. When St Augustine and his companions arrived at the end of the sixth century to convert the Anglo-Saxons, therefore, they were able in some instances to make use of surviving Roman architecture. King Æthelberht of Kent, says Bede, initially let them use a church just outside Canterbury "built in ancient times in honour of St Martin", previously used by his queen, Bertha, who had been raised as a Christian in her native Francia. Although rebuilt in later centuries, this church still stands, and its walls contain reused Roman material. A little while later, Augustine, with Æthelberht's assistance, restored another ancient church located within the city walls. This became the first Canterbury Cathedral.

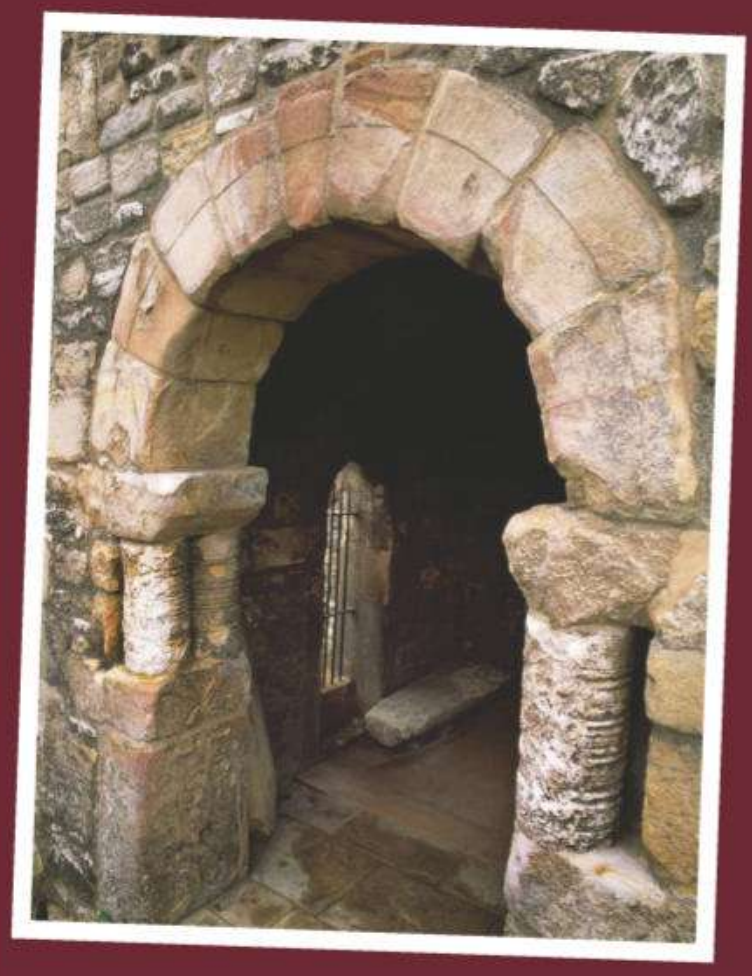
In the majority of cases, however, missionaries had to build new churches from scratch. Those erected by Irish monks tended to be fashioned from timber and thatched with reeds, in keeping with their ethos of simplicity and humility. Roman missionaries, by contrast, craved more impressive and permanent structures, of the kind they were familiar with in the Holy City. By basing themselves in old Roman towns, they had access to a ready supply of stone from ruined buildings, but the builders had to be imported from the continent – the art of stonemasonry had been lost in Britain after the end of Roman rule.

Eventually, churchmen of both traditions, backed by the generosity of converted kings, demanded buildings made of stone. St Cedd, a monk of Lindisfarne who became bishop of the East Saxons in 654, recycled the masonry of an old Roman fort on the Essex coast to create a splendid church at Bradwell-on-Sea, which still stands today.

In Northumbria, meanwhile, an architectural renaissance was driven by the competition between Bishop Wilfrid and his long-time rival, Benedict Biscop. Wilfrid raised new churches at Ripon and Hexham, in the latter case reusing stone from nearby Roman Corbridge, while Biscop founded the famous monastery at Wearmouth which Bede entered as a boy. Modest by later standards, at the time these churches, built by foreign masons and glaziers, were regarded with awe on account of their novelty and sophistication. The surviving porch at Wearmouth, and the crypts at Ripon and Hexham, give some idea of their original appearance.



The crypt in Ripon Cathedral, North Yorkshire. This church was raised by Bishop Wilfrid, and at the time it was viewed as highly sophisticated



The stone porch at Wearmouth monastery. It was built by European masons, as the art of stonemasonry had disappeared from Britain when the Roman empire fell

content to see Christianity spread through more overt forms of violence. For instance, on the occasion of the dedication of his splendid new church at Ripon, the bishop delivered a speech before King Ecgberht of Northumbria and all his courtiers, in which he listed all the lands that had been donated by the king and his predecessors.

Ecgberht had won these lands as a result of his recent war of conquest against the British rulers to his west, and Wilfrid had been given the estates deserted by the British clergy, "fleeing from our own hostile sword".

As this implies, the British were not pagans but Christians, but they refused to celebrate Easter on the correct date, so war against them was felt to be justified. "Indeed," affirmed Wilfrid's biographer, "God would be pleased with the good kings for the gift of so much land to our bishop."

Merciless slaughter

When it came to the conversion of the Isle of Wight, however, even Wilfrid's biographer sought to minimise the bishop's involvement, so shocking was the violence that unfolded. During Wilfrid's time in Sussex, the kingdom was invaded by a pagan warlord called Cædwalla, who killed the sitting South Saxon king and then went on to depose the king of Wessex. By the mid-680s he was poised to conquer the Isle of Wight, which at the time was an independent kingdom. Cædwalla, says Bede, "endeavoured to wipe out all the natives with merciless slaughter, and to replace them with inhabitants from his own kingdom". This genocidal scheme, carried out by a heathen king, was nevertheless supported by Wilfrid, for the inhabitants of Wight had not yet been converted, and the bishop saw conquest as a way of bringing them to the light. In return for lending his spiritual support, Wilfrid was given a quarter of the island as reward – a massive endowment of land that meant Christianity was established on the strongest of footings.

The king of Wight, Arwald, seems to have perished during the fighting, but his two younger brothers managed to escape to the mainland, where they hoped to remain hidden. Soon, though, they were betrayed and handed over to Cædwalla, who ordered their execution. The only consolation Bede was able to draw was that both boys were permitted to receive baptism before they were killed, "and so made sure of their entry into the eternal kingdom".

As Bede noted, the Isle of Wight was the last of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms to convert. By the late 680s, according to his reckoning, Britain had no more heathen rulers. Half a century later, when Bede was writing his famous *Ecclesiastical History*, Christianity had advanced a great deal further, and he was able to conclude by listing all the many bishops who were ministering to the various kingdoms and celebrate the continued increase in the number of monks and nuns.

It was thanks to the assiduousness of these individuals that thousands of others must have eventually been brought to a fuller understanding of the new faith. Men and women such as Augustine, Cuthbert and Hild, through their tireless efforts and exemplary devotion, had gently and patiently won hearts and minds in a way that led future generations to remember them as saints. Scholars like Bede, or Hadrian, the abbot of Canterbury who came from north Africa, ensured the history of the conversion was not forgotten and that the learned languages of Latin and Greek were taught as widely as possible.

But we deceive ourselves, as Edward Freeman did, if we pretend that the rapid advance of Christianity among the Anglo-Saxons, particularly in its early days, was accomplished *only* by these peaceful methods and did not involve "persecutions at the point of [the] sword". For many, their initial conversion was brought about through compulsion, violence and bloodshed. H

Spreading the word
An illustrated page from the St Augustine Gospels, which may have come to Kent in 597 as part of St Augustine's mission. Christianity eventually won out over paganism, with every Anglo-Saxon kingdom converted by the late 680s

Bishop Wilfrid supported this genocidal scheme, as he saw conquest as a way of bringing heathens to the light

Marc Morris is a medieval historian whose newest book, *The Anglo-Saxons: A History of the Beginnings of England*, is published by Hutchinson on 20 May. He is giving a virtual lecture on the book that same day. Turn to page 107 for more details of our events.

MORE FROM US Listen to Marc Morris discussing common misconceptions about Anglo-Saxons on our **podcast**. *historyextra.com/podcasts*

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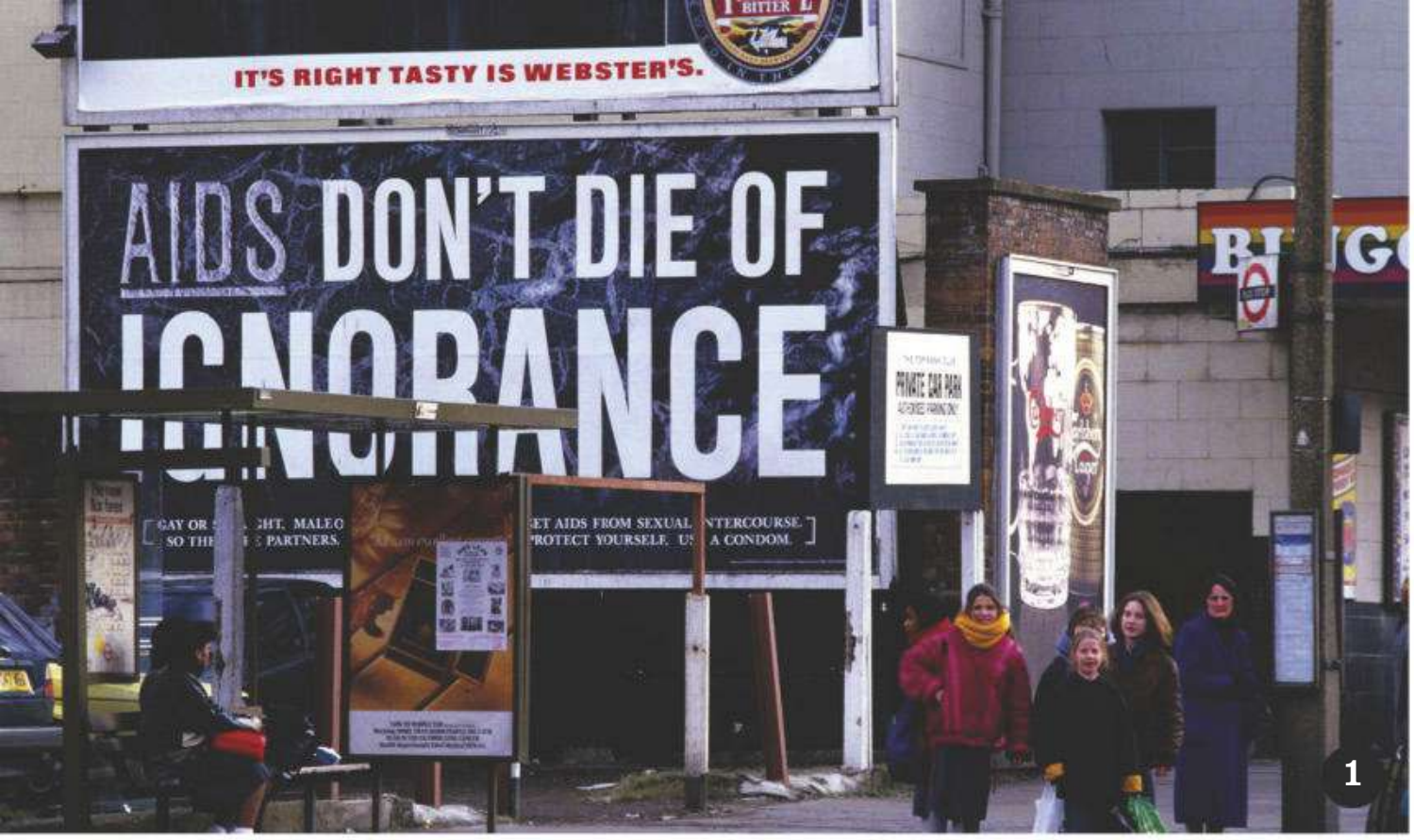

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The epidemic that changed Britain

Forty years ago, the UK found itself in the grip of a virus that killed thousands of people and sparked fear, confusion and prejudice – HIV. **Janet Weston** explores the Aids crisis as it unfolded throughout the 1980s, and how it transformed attitudes about everything from sexuality to healthcare

SHUTTERSTOCK/GETTY IMAGES/CHANNEL 4/BLACK HIV/AIDS NETWORK/BRIDGEMAN/ SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

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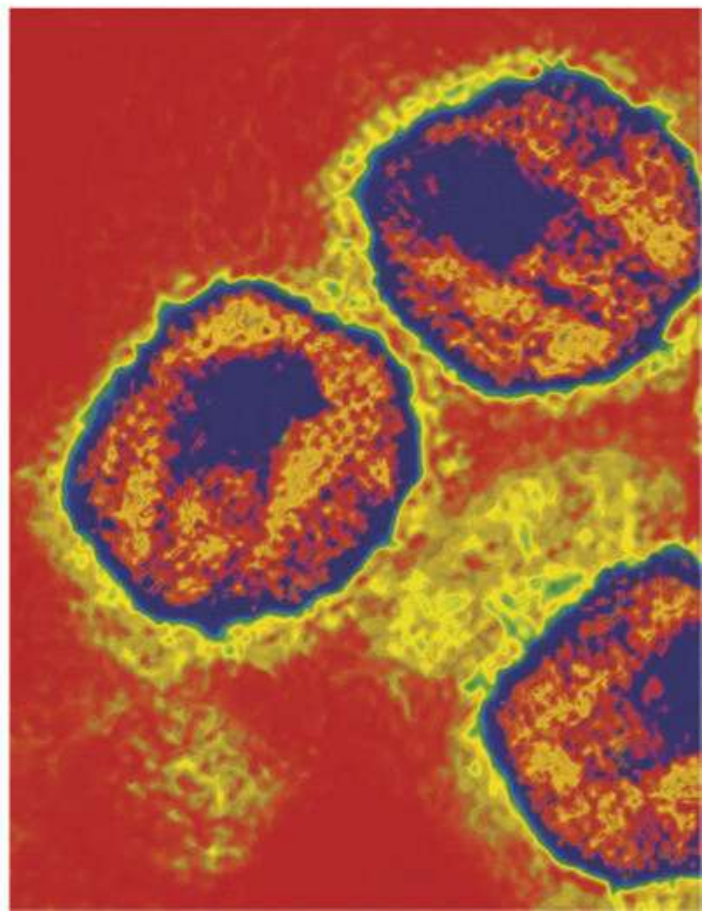

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SCENES FROM A CRISIS

1 A British government poster highlighting the dangers of Aids, 1987. The campaign successfully raised awareness, but its tone was criticised

2 Princess Diana at the opening of a specialist HIV/Aids ward in London, 1987. Press coverage of her shaking hands with patients helped dispel myths about how the virus spread

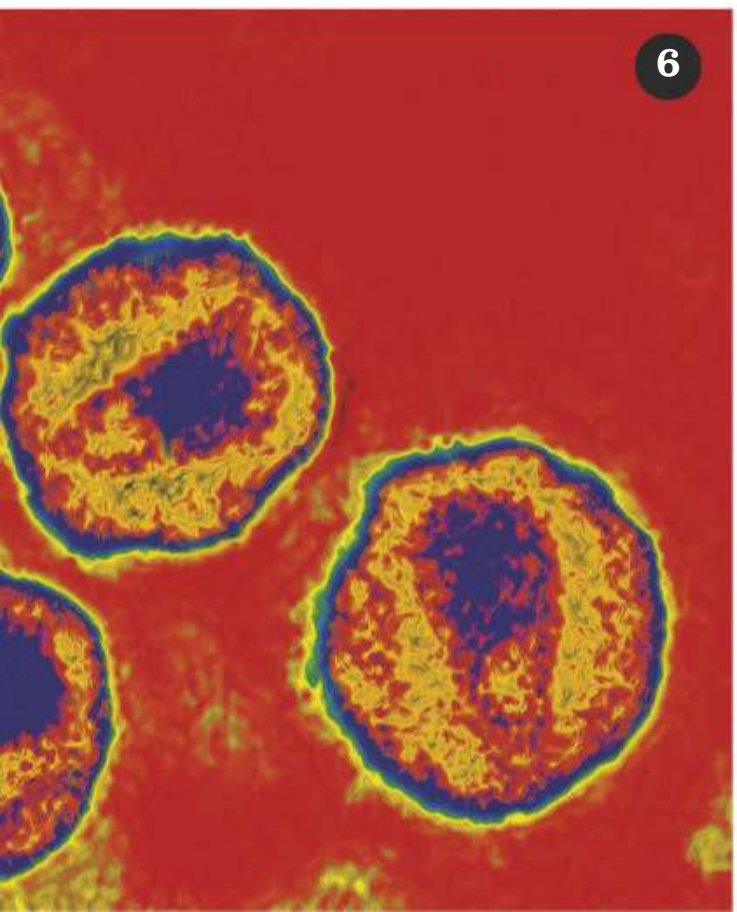
3 A scene from the recent Channel 4 drama *It's a Sin*, charting the lives of a group of young gay men living in London in the 1980s

4 An image from a 1980s advert promoting sexual health by the Black HIV/Aids Network

5 Dancers pictured in 1986 at Taboo, performance artist Leigh Bowery's London nightclub. As its name suggests, it became famous for defying conventions of gender and sexuality

6 HIV seen through an electron microscope

7 News reports on Aids from 1985. The spread of the virus became a global concern



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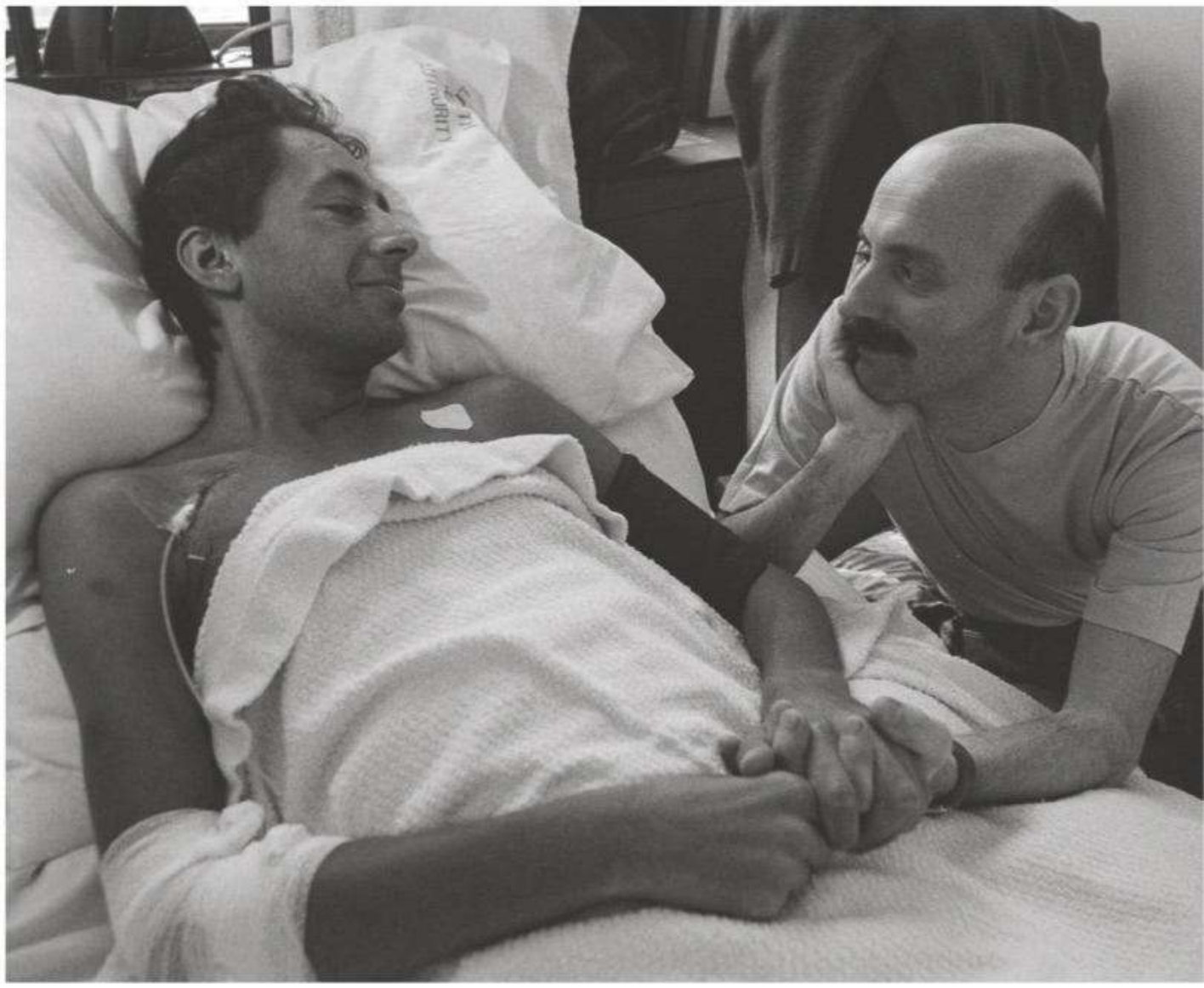


Borrowed time A patient in a specialist Aids ward in London's Middlesex Hospital with his partner in 1993. Photographer Gideon Mendel documented the lives of four such patients; all died soon after the images were taken

In the early 1980s, reports of a strange new disease began emerging from the United States. It was picked up in the British gay press – *Gay News* ran a story in November 1981 under the headline "Gay cancer or mass media scare?" – but relatively few people noticed. Even among those who did, confusion and doubt reigned: weren't these tales of a "gay cancer" just fear-mongering, a backlash against the gains of the fight for gay liberation in the 1970s? How could a disease target gay men, anyway?

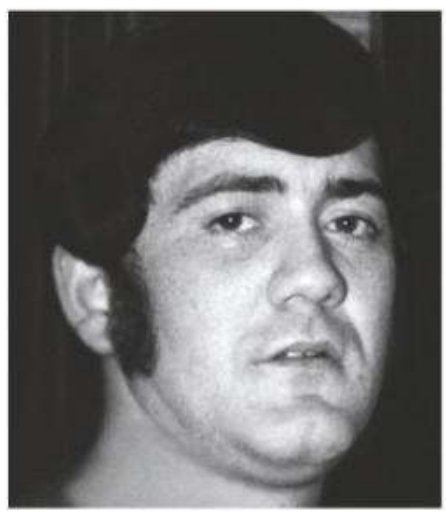
Such suspicions were not without good reason. The medical profession had a difficult history with people who didn't conform to heterosexual norms: less than 10 years earlier, homosexuality had still been categorised by the internationally influential American Psychiatric Association as a mental disorder. And when it came to Aids, the lack of knowledge about its cause or mode of transmission led to wild speculation. One theory linked Aids to the use of "poppers", a recreational drug popular on the gay scene; another proposed that Aids was the end point of too many sexually transmitted infections.

The picture grew still more complex as the symptoms associated with this new illness were also identified both among injecting drug users and people with the blood-clotting disorder haemophilia, including women and children. By July 1983, there had been 14 reported cases of Aids in Britain, all among men. Most were gay, including one man who also injected drugs, but the group included another who had been receiving treatment for haemophilia in the form of blood products. Just two months later, the number had risen to 24, and included a woman and a second man with haemophilia.

As numbers of diagnoses in the United Kingdom started to rise sharply, the deaths began. Many people died very soon after diagnosis, as an array of opportunistic infections took advantage of their weakened immune systems. Terrence Higgins died in July 1982, one of the first deaths in the UK attributed to Aids. His partner, Rupert Whitaker, recalled asking the doctors whether Higgins' death could have been caused by the strange "American disease", but was dismissed out of hand: he was not family, so they couldn't tell him anything. It wasn't until a few years later that he found out they expected him to die soon, too.

In the aftermath of Higgins' death, his friends joined with Whitaker to set up a trust in his name to provide information and education in this information vacuum – and to provide support and services for people affected by Aids. In those frightening early years, charities such as the Terrence Higgins Trust led the charge. Men and women who had begun to see the impact of this disease first-hand devoted themselves to taking action. As well as fundraising, they gathered and shared the latest information, often looking abroad for insights from countries with more advanced epidemics. Volunteers and activists also campaigned for accurate media coverage and government attention, and ran phone lines and community centres to provide counselling and advice.

Men and women who had begun to see the impact of this disease first-hand devoted themselves to taking action



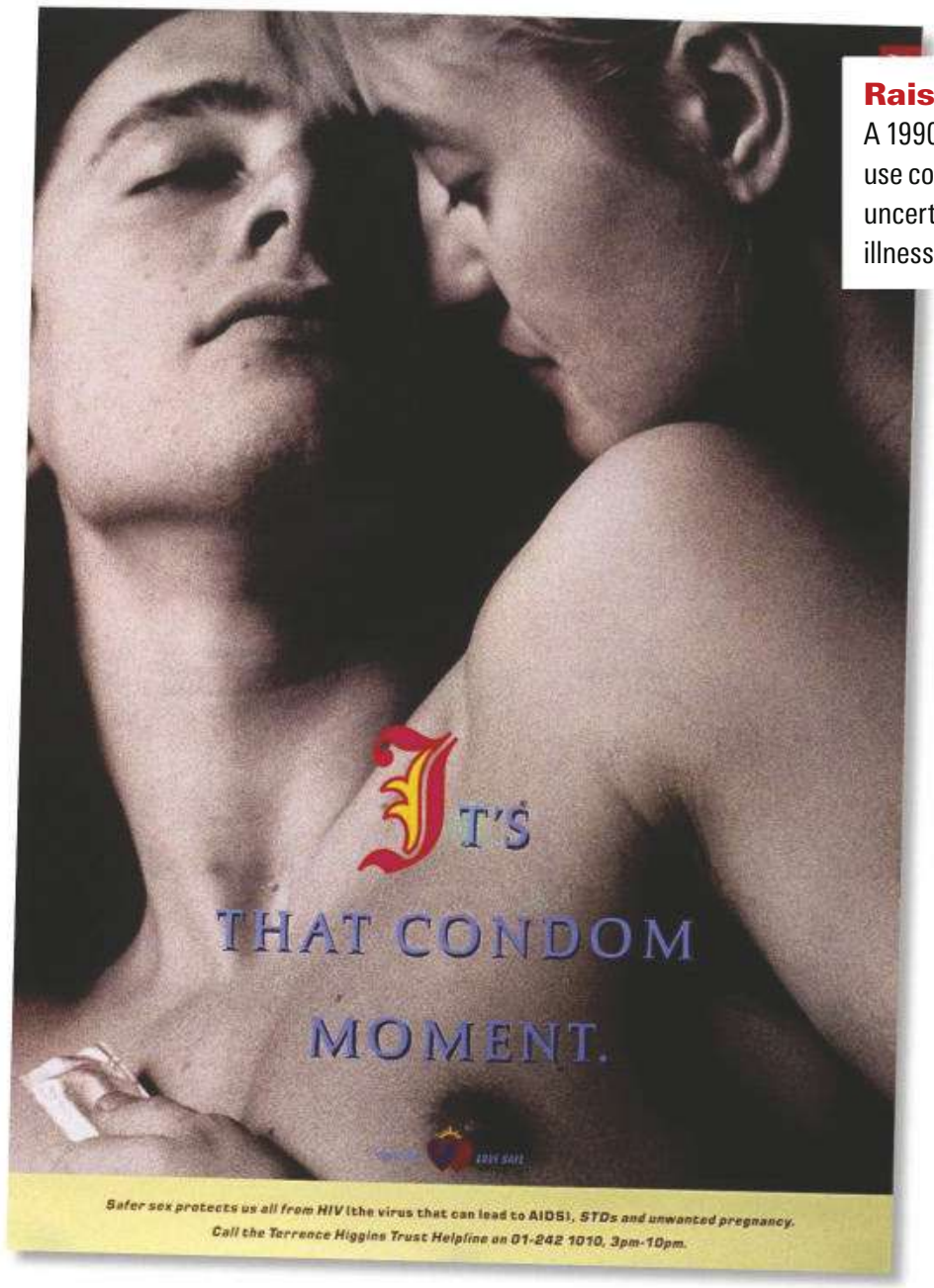
Friendship and loss Terrence Higgins, shown in the early 1980s, was one of the first people in Britain whose death was attributed to Aids. His partner and friends set up a charity in his name

Dread of infection

Given the uncertain and rapidly changing state of knowledge about Aids, it was often difficult to know what advice to offer. If this really was a sexually transmitted disease, then perhaps abstinence was the answer – but with a newly self-confident gay community and a flourishing scene in many of Britain's cities, this hardly seemed realistic. There was an idea that condoms might reduce the risks, but it was far from certain, and there were fears that condoms might give a false sense of security. Campaigners and volunteers struggled to decide on the best line to take.

Even so, given the paucity of medical knowledge, many of these volunteers were better informed than the average doctor or nurse. In fact, many people with Aids in the 1980s knew more about their condition than their own clinicians, and some clinicians were willing to listen and learn. The idea of

GIDEON MENDEL/TERRENCE HIGGINS TRUST


IT'S
THAT CONDOM
MOMENT.
Safer sex protects us all from HIV (the virus that can lead to AIDS), STDs and unwanted pregnancy.
Call the Terrence Higgins Trust Helpline on 01-242 1010, 3pm-10pm.

Raising awareness
A 1990s Terrence Higgins Trust poster encouraging people to use condoms. In the early eighties, there had been widespread uncertainty about the causes and modes of transmission of the illness, which led to indecision about the best approach to take

The show must go on
Freddie Mercury, lead singer of the band Queen, in 1989, two years after being diagnosed with HIV. He publicly confirmed the diagnosis in 1991, the day before he died

Community action
Gay and lesbian people march through San Francisco to raise awareness of Aids, 1983. The first reports of what was later identified as HIV infections emerged from the US early in the 1980s

SHUTTERSTOCK/MIRRORPIX/GETTY IMAGES

patients as participants in or even consumers of healthcare, whose experiences and views should be valued by biomedicine, had been building since the 1950s and was given a huge boost by patient expertise and advocacy during the first decades of HIV and Aids.

With no known cause, no certainty over the mode of transmission, and all early signs indicating that Aids was invariably quickly fatal, the dread of infection was overwhelming. Nurses recalled being scared of their patients, caring for them in isolation while wearing two sets of gloves and gowns, using disposable cutlery and plates and burning bedsheets after use. "Nurses didn't even touch a patient's notes (which had 'Infectious' written at the top) without gloves," one recalled. "It was just horrendous."

Life and death on the margins

The virus causing Aids, now known as HIV, was identified in 1984. Soon thereafter a test for HIV antibodies – indicating exposure to the virus – was approved for use in the UK. The ability to test individuals, including those showing no symptoms, was transformative in terms of gathering data about the epidemic, but the results were alarming. Initial testing revealed that perhaps as many as three-quarters of people with haemophilia already had HIV, as did some of their sexual partners.

Haemophilia was commonly treated with products generated from blood donations from large numbers of people, and around 1,200 people in the UK with haemophilia were infected with HIV in the 1980s. For the press, they were the "innocent victims" of the virus.

That label naturally also served as a reminder that there were supposedly "guilty" ones, too, and fear quickly turned into hostility and discrimination. Those affected by Aids were mostly gay men, with drug users the second-largest group. These were already marginalised communities who could easily be blamed for their own misfortune, and Aids soon became deeply stigmatised: a marker of deviant living. Some of those with Aids were glad to be informed that their condition had finally led to a form of cancer, because at least cancer was something that you could tell people about without shame.

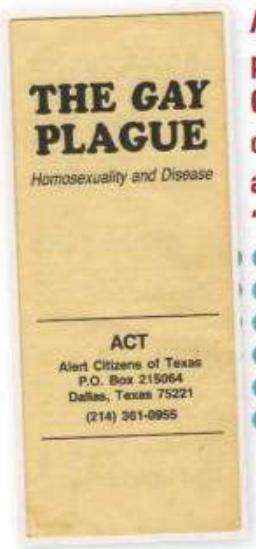
In Edinburgh, heroin use had become particularly prevalent in the early 1980s; testing carried out by one doctor, Roy Robertson, revealed that more than half of his patients were HIV positive. The scarcity of needles and syringes, which were often seized by police, meant that drug users shared and repeatedly reused their injecting equipment, and infection had been spreading rapidly.

Public health policy regarding drugs in Scotland underwent a dramatic shift in

A GLOBAL CONCERN

Key moments in the world's battle with HIV/Aids in the 1980s

Members of a *junkibonden*, or drug-users' union, plan a protest in Amsterdam, 1984. Their efforts to provide sterile needles later gained official funding



A 1983 pamphlet produced by the Alert Citizens of Texas opposing homosexuality and warning of a "gay plague"

United States 1981
Clinical reports began to describe clusters of a rare type of pneumonia and other unusual infections among gay men and then injecting drug users, in California and New York. News of this novel disease was picked up by the gay press. Different names and possible explanations were floated and the term "Aids" was coined in 1982, but the original idea of a "gay plague" proved difficult to dislodge.

Cuba 1983
The government set up a National Aids Commission and ordered the destruction of all blood products imported from overseas. Law 41 was passed, giving the Ministry of Public Health power to enforce the quarantining and mandatory treatment of anyone affected by diseases deemed to pose significant community risk. The first case of HIV was diagnosed three years later, and the quarantining in sanatoria of anyone diagnosed with HIV or Aids began. This remained in place until 1993.

Zaire 1984
Research in Kinshasa provided strong evidence of the transmission of HIV between heterosexual couples. Here, there were just as many women with HIV or Aids as men. These findings were not easily accepted by the scientific community but were finally published in *The Lancet*. The prospect of a global epidemic affecting not only gay men, drug users and haemophiliacs, but also heterosexual couples, began to stir more governments to action.

PODCAST Don't miss our new podcast series exploring the history of **HIV/Aids in Britain in the 1980s**, coming later this summer: *historyextra.com/podcast*

Netherlands 1984

A drug users' "union", known as a *junkibonden* and active since 1980, began to provide sterile needles and syringes to injecting drug users in Amsterdam. Initially introduced to tackle the spread of hepatitis B through shared needles, the scale of needle provision was stepped up considerably in light of HIV and Aids and eventually received government funding. The union published literature by and for drug users, and offered peer support and advice on safer injecting.

USSR 1987

The first Aids-related death was recorded, a few years after Russia's health minister declared that it was a "western disease" that would have no impact on a country without drug addicts or prostitution. There were more than 500 known cases by 1990, but the Soviet authorities emphasised that most of these were foreign nationals. A few years after the collapse of the USSR, reports of rapid HIV spread emerged: by the mid-1990s Russia was said to be on the brink of a vast epidemic.

A nurse takes a blood sample from an Aids patient in Moscow, 1991. The Russian health minister initially claimed that Aids was a "western disease"

Senegal 1986

The first cases of Aids were reported. This was a different and less virulent strand of the virus, first identified in West Africa by Senegalese researchers the year before. It brought international recognition and encouraged national political attention to HIV and Aids. Rates of infection remained consistently low, thanks not only to the different viral strand, but also factors including the legalisation and regulation of sex work and high safety standards concerning blood products, both of which pre-dated the epidemic.

A public health poster from Senegal. The nation's attitude to sex workers contributed to its low HIV infection rates

Japan 1989

Haemophiliacs infected with HIV filed lawsuits in Tokyo and Osaka, demanding compensation from the government and pharmaceutical companies. Contaminated blood products imported from the US meant that around 40 per cent of Japanese people with haemophilia were infected with HIV. This "tainted blood" scandal dominated headlines and perceptions of HIV and Aids in Japan: plaintiffs and their families finally received a formal apology and compensation in 1996.

Ryūhei Kawada, one of hundreds of haemophilia patients infected with HIV in Japan in the 1980s, testifies before parliament in 1996

UNT DIGITAL LIBRARY/ ALAMY/SHUTTERSTOCK/GETTY IMAGE

response, with attention turning to ways of minimising the harms of drug use instead of insisting on abstinence. It became a priority to reduce injecting drug use as much as possible, for example by prescribing methadone to those addicted to heroin, and for those who continued to inject, to provide sterile equipment. The anxiety surrounding HIV/Aids and its high profile made such radical policy changes possible.

The availability of a test for HIV brought its own problems, though. Many people were tested without their knowledge and permission, misinformed of the meaning of their test result, or not told at all. Eighteen-year-old John Campbell, who would later set up the Coalition of People Living with HIV and Aids and advise the government on HIV in prisons, had been arrested in 1986 for "male importuning" and was tested on arrival into prison. But the charges were dropped, he was released, and he had no idea that he had tested positive for another 10 months.

Life support Another of Gideon Mendel's images from Middlesex Hospital's Aids ward in the early 1990s shows a nurse kissing a patient before he left for home. Such patients often made repeated returns to hospital

Fear and loathing

The profile of HIV/Aids increased in the second half of the 1980s. Many people in the UK had remained entirely or mostly oblivious to the unfolding disaster, but this soon changed. Although emerging research indicated that HIV could not be transmitted by casual contact, such as a handshake or a shared cup, a lot of the media coverage became increasingly hyperbolic. "I'd shoot my son if he had Aids, says vicar" ran one lurid headline in *The Sun* in October 1985. Such coverage often quoted the extreme views of people from all walks of life, from publicans seeking to ban people with Aids from their establishments, to the chief constable of Greater Manchester who said that people with Aids were "swirling around in a human cesspit of their own making".

The fact that people with HIV or Aids might hold down jobs seemed particularly horrifying. Newspapers anxiously reported that people with HIV or Aids might work as airline cabin crews, bus drivers, teachers – or most worryingly of all, as doctors and dentists. Many people with, or suspected of having, HIV or Aids were fired: the Terrence Higgins Trust dealt with about 100 cases of employment discrimination each year.

This period has been characterised as one of "wartime emergency", with mounting panic finally leading to government action. The Conservative government appointed a cabinet committee to tackle Aids in autumn 1986, and on 21 November there was an emergency debate in the House of Commons. Opinions diverged dramatically, between those favouring regulatory measures such as quarantines and compulsory testing, to those who preferred a more liberal approach, including the promotion or provision of condoms and guarantees of confidentiality for those testing positive.

> For the most severely affected communities, the extent of the loss in the late 1980s and early 1990s was overwhelming

Grave warning
A still from the UK government's 1987 campaign, whose grim tone became notorious

Perhaps most memorable, in terms of government response to the crisis, was the nationwide health education campaign launched in January 1987. In the face of a significant lack of enthusiasm from then prime minister Margaret Thatcher, this included television spots, billboards and a leaflet for every household. Actor John Hurt lent his voice to the now-notorious television advert. Over footage of the word "Aids" being chiselled into a tombstone, he intoned: "If you ignore Aids, it could be the death of you. Don't die of ignorance."

This campaign has often been remembered as a success. It was a clear sign of action, and expensive too, costing around £20m. Polls afterwards suggested that viewers felt more confident of their understanding of Aids, and ultimately, the worst predictions for the epidemic in the UK did not materialise. However, the campaign also relied heavily upon generalised impressions of death, disaster and doom, doing little to dispel rumours or to educate and help those already affected or most at risk. Artist and activist Leigh Neal received her diagnosis just as these adverts aired; she remembered their clear message that Aids meant death, and the environment of fear and hostility that this created towards her – including

GIDEON MENDEL/ADVERTISING ARCHIVE

Breaking boundaries Activists gather outside London's Pentonville Prison to protest against imprisoned people being denied condoms, 1989. Helium-filled condoms were used to transport contraceptives and leaflets about Aids over the institution's walls. Aids activism such as this reached its zenith in the late 1980s

GORDON RAINSFORD

bricks thrown through her window.

For those who were not white gay men, this lack of information and support could be particularly acute. The later 1980s saw the creation of more specialist advocacy and support groups to fill these gaps. One of the founders of Positively Women, a group set up in 1987 by and for women with HIV, remembered feeling "doubly isolated" in most HIV/Aids support groups, as a woman and a former drug user. Mainliners, a support group run by and for HIV-positive drug users, was founded in the same year.

So, too, was the Broderip Ward at Middlesex Hospital in London: a specialist ward for those with HIV and Aids. It was opened by Princess Diana, who took pains to shake hands multiple times with patients at the ward before the cameras, without wearing gloves. Garnering huge press coverage, many recalled this as a vital moment, helping to dispel some of the myths swirling around Aids at the time.

This ward and others like it represented greater resources and medical expertise dedicated to HIV and Aids, but also many more people suffering and dying. Specialist wards could provide a sense of community and even fun, in dark times. HIV nurse Barbara von Barsewich described one patient, "a tall, Italian, glamorous man who came out of a side room [in the ward] at night-time in a blue ball gown and six-inch heels… he swung around and just looked so gorgeous. And then he started coughing up bits of his lung… It was just so hard. It was so painful. You knew exactly what was happening."

Love and loss

For the most severely affected communities, the extent of the loss in the late 1980s and early 1990s was overwhelming. Julian Hows recalled the deaths of four lovers over these years. One was passionate about cars and was eventually driven to hospital by Hows and friends in a Mercedes-Benz, borrowed for the occasion. As they arrived at the hospital and opened the car door, Hows remembered: "A really nice nurse said, 'You realise your friend has gone.'" He had died on the journey.

Gay men and their friends experienced years of countless funerals, with social circles of young people all but obliterated. At many of these funerals, it remained taboo to mention Aids. Many families felt, as writer and activist Simon Watney put it, "condemned to silence, to euphemism".

In the mass media and popular discourse, Aids stubbornly remained something that happened to "other people". Generalised fears became more deeply racialised, as news emerged of the epidemic's disastrous spread and possible origins in Africa. Continuing the tradition of self-help and community organising among those affected by HIV and Aids, volunteers set up the Black HIV/Aids Network in 1989 and began to deliver literature, films and services specifically addressing black and Asian people in the UK.

Towards the end of the 1980s, activism surrounding Aids reached a high point. Members of the newly formed London branch of ACT-UP – the Aids Coalition to Unleash Power – organised a series of eye-catching protests designed to attract headlines. Targets included Australia House, in response to new laws requiring immigrants to take an HIV test, and Pentonville Prison, where helium-filled condoms were released to carry leaflets about Aids over prison walls.

The London branch of ACT-UP soon disbanded, though, and in the 1990s Aids gradually disappeared from the headlines. The arrival of much more effective drug treatments from the mid-1990s onwards transformed HIV into a chronic but manageable condition. And, although there had previously been a great deal of interest in deploying insights from history to understand and contextualise responses to Aids, historical attention to the epidemic also waned.

HIV/Aids had transformed attitudes, practices and policies around sex and sexuality, drug addiction, activism and community-building, as well as hospital hygiene, clinical research and doctor-patient relationships. As the sense of urgency and, later, the memory of the epidemic began to fade, not all of these changes were sustained. Roy Robertson, still working in addiction studies in Scotland, reported that HIV had reappeared in a vulnerable population of injecting drug users in Glasgow in 2015, in a political and policy context that bore striking similarities to that of the early 1980s.

Four decades on from the first diagnoses and deaths, there is now a resurgence of interest. Oral history projects are springing up, and new research is beginning to investigate less well-known experiences. There is a campaign for a public memorial to the lives lost to Aids, and a clear desire to ensure that all the losses and gains of those years are not forgotten. After all, a generation of people diagnosed in the 1980s are now the first people with HIV to reach retirement age. The history of HIV/Aids in the 1980s is still unfolding. H

Janet Weston is assistant professor at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

WEBSITE You'll find more information on HIV/Aids in Britain in the 1980s at the website of the **National HIV Story Trust**: *nhst.org.uk*

WATCH An episode of the BBC Two series **Saved by a Stranger** covered the HIV/Aids crisis. You can catch up with that on the iPlayer: *bbc.co.uk/iplayer*

“His flesh had rotted, and his bed was full of worms”

Richard Sugg reports on five of history’s most eccentric hermits, from a holy man who died from the shock of having a bath to a recluse who lived in a pigsty

A 16th-century depiction of Saint Simeon Stylites. Living on top of a pillar for at least 28 years, he drew huge crowds who marvelled at his excessive asceticism

GETTY IMAGES

Living the high life

Just what does it take to make a hermit? According to the Cambridge Dictionary, it’s “a person who lives alone and apart from the rest of society, especially for religious reasons”. But in reality, these characters can be far more complex. For more than 1,500 years holy, eccentric or billionaire recluses have been figures of fascination – but also of paradox.

One example is a monk named Simeon. While he lived in the monastery of Teleda, Syria, in c411 AD, he sparked many complaints. Simeon smelled so bad that no one could bear to stand near him. Further investigation revealed that he had bound a rope around himself beneath his tunic, yanking it so tightly that his flesh had rotted, and his bed was full of worms.

At this stage, however, Simeon Stylites had barely begun on his unusual career. By the time that he died in AD 459, he claimed to have spent 47 years living on top of a pillar. Even allowing for some boasting, he seems to have spent at least 28 years up there. To be precise, there had been various pillars, of increasingly great height – the last being 60 feet tall. Measuring 3.5 feet in diameter, his final pillar supported a good-sized platform of around 43 square feet at its summit, and it initially had a canopy of palm branches to keep off sun and rain. Isabel Colegate (who details all this in her wonderful book on hermits, *A Pelican in the Wilderness*) adds that Simeon also had use of a lavatory, with an earthenware pipe running down to the ground.

If to many of us, “hermit” means solitude, Simeon appears paradoxical. He might nowadays be dismissed as a pathological attention-seeker. His excesses of asceticism and self-loathing drew crowds from all over Europe and the Middle East to marvel at him. Simeon tirelessly shouted sermons at watching crowds, and one observer saw him make 1,244 genuflections (bending one knee as a sign of respect) before they lost count. In our times, Simeon would doubtless have signed a lucrative contract for a special edition of *I’m a Celebrity, Get Me Down From Here*.

The hermitage at Painshill Park, Surrey. The garden's owner, Charles Hamilton, advertised for a live-in hermit. If the recluse followed Hamilton's strict rules, he would earn 700 guineas

Engraved for the Modern Universal British Traveller
A View from the West side of the Island in the GARDEN of HOPKINS Esq near Cobham in Surry

Painshill Park (as shown in this 1779 engraving) was home to a hermitage, grotto and Roman ruin

PAINSHILL PARK TRUST/ALAMY

Hermits for hire

In the 1740s Charles Hamilton (son of the sixth Earl of Abercorn) began creating a landscape garden at Painshill, near Cobham in Surrey. Along with a grotto and a Roman ruin, Painshill had a rustic two-room hermitage, "composed of logs and roots". All that was needed now was a live-in hermit. What could better satisfy the 18th-century vogue for picturesque history? And so Hamilton advertised for applicants, stressing that the hermit must "continue in the Hermitage [for] seven years, where he would be provided with a Bible, optical glasses, a mat for his feet, a hassock for his pillow, an hour-glass for his time-piece, water for his beverage and food from the house".

The hermit would have to wear "a camlet robe, never… cut his beard or nails, stray beyond the limits of Mr Hamilton's grounds, or exchange one word with the servant". Isabel Colegate explains that he would be paid 700 guineas if he lasted for seven years, but he would receive nothing if he broke the rules or left early. In fact, the hermit who was hired only "lasted three weeks before he was spotted creeping out of the grounds to go down to the local pub".

Another version of the story puts the reward at £3,000. And the place was hardly gloomy. The gardening expert Thomas Whately stated in 1770 that, from the front room, the hermit could look out over "the gardens and the country" around the river Mole, "which is rich with every appearance of inhabitants and cultivation".

Perhaps our paid hermit was driven to drink by the inauthenticity of the whole set-up. If so, he might have been much happier when the estate fell into ruins after 1948 – until a programme of restoration began in the 1980s.

Love and squalor

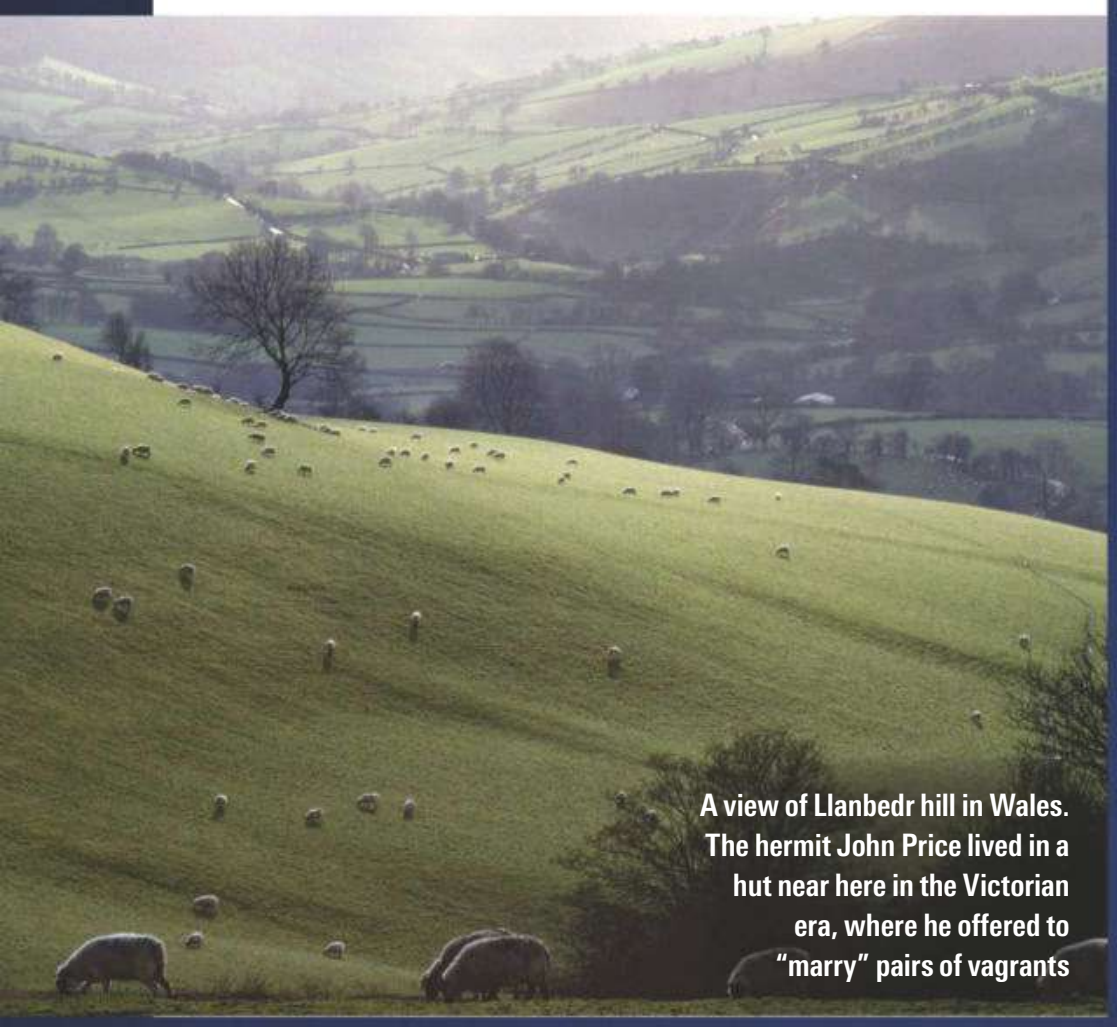
Come the Victorian era, a holy hermit could still be found at Llanbedr in Wales. Here in July 1872, the curate Francis Kilvert paid him a visit, leaving the bright sunshine for the interior of a hut where he found "the squalor, the dirt, the dust, the foulness and wretchedness… indescribable, almost inconceivable. And in this cabin thus lives the Solitary of Llanbedr, the Reverend John Price, Master of Arts of Cambridge."

At the same time, walking out with Price a little later, Kilvert was struck by the way "the people… touched their hats to his reverence with great respect. They recognised him as a very holy man, and if the Solitary had lived a thousand years ago he would have been revered as a hermit and perhaps canonised as a Saint."

Price was amazingly unworldly and selfless. According to the writer Jeremy Bolwell, to get any sort of congregation, Price had to resort to bribery, paying his listeners between two and six pence a head to come to services, and almost certainly out of his own pocket.

"Price even offered," claims Bolwell, "to marry pairs of vagrants who were 'attached' or 'living in sin' on the road as couples, paying them five shillings as an incentive. With poor eyesight and a failing grip on reality, apparently he married several couples a few times each." And, Bolwell contends, Price was so generous that "he even provided oil-fired heaters in the colder winter months in the church and permitted tramps and hoboes to cook their dinners during his services."

More or less abandoned by the church establishment, Price lived on in varying degrees of squalor until his death in 1895, aged 86. When he was finally "taken to Talgarth hospital… his clothes had to be scissored off his body and he was bathed, which resulted in his death, such was the trauma".



A view of Llanbedr hill in Wales. The hermit John Price lived in a hut near here in the Victorian era, where he offered to "marry" pairs of vagrants

Joseph Underhill in the 1880s. Although he was far from poor, he insisted on living in a five-foot-square pigsty

A dandy in a pigsty

Secular hermits could be even more unusual. At Pailton near Rugby, a man called Joseph Underhill lived in a pigsty. It was around five foot square, and he had to crawl into it on his hands and knees. Readers may be relieved to hear that he was not sharing it with pigs. This, after all, would have been a glaring case of sub-letting – as Underhill paid a Mrs Robins sixpence a week for his cramped accommodation.

Underhill, supposedly a great dandy until he was disappointed in love years before, was not poor. In February 1890 two boys were charged with stealing £26 from him, and the newspaper account of the theft stated that he "gave nearly £200 to be banked". Local authorities had tried and failed to move Underhill from the pigsty. After the theft he was placed in a charitable home for some time, but he was soon back on his hands and knees, squeezing himself through the low gap into the muck.

Underhill was finally removed, stretchered off on a door, the following January, in a dying state. Even now, in terminal weakness, he attempted to escape and get back in. Those clearing out the sty found the floor "covered with filth fully half a foot deep". When Underhill died, apparently of exposure and bronchitis, he left behind him £125 6s.2d (approximately £16,000 today).

ALAMY/WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY RECORD OFFICE PH352/105/27

American billionaire Howard Hughes (shown right in a car in 1947) went from a visionary filmmaker to a germ-obsessed recluse, dying in 1976 (see above image)

GETTY IMAGES

The reclusive aviator

Aged just seven, I saw Howard Hughes stretchered across an airfield on the evening news. The sight was so horrific that it has stayed with me all my life. When he died in April 1976, officially from kidney failure, Hughes stood 6ft 2ins and weighed just 90 lbs. He had once been the great Renaissance man of America: a daredevil aviator, a visionary filmmaker and a figure of impossible glamour. When millionaires were still mythical, Hughes was a billionaire.

By 1950 Hughes was already so obsessive about germs that the unused windows of his cars and houses were sealed with masking tape. As authors Donald Barlett and James Steele explain, aides, drivers and message clerks all had to wear white cotton gloves of the type used in film editing. According to the pair, to open a can of food for Hughes you needed: "One unopened newspaper, one sterile can opener, one large sterile plate, one sterile fork, one sterile spoon, two sterile brushes, two bars of soap and sterile paper towels."

Come spring 1957, Hughes was living at the Beverley Hills hotel in Bungalow Four. He refused to allow janitors to clean and banned his projectionists and guards from the bathroom, suggesting they use milk cartons to relieve themselves. Wearing the same brown shirt and slacks for weeks, he suddenly discarded his clothes and went about naked. Refusing to touch doorknobs, he would kick the door as a signal for an aide to open it. For long periods Hughes, with unwashed and straggling hair and beard, and finger and toenails so long that they curled in on themselves, must have looked indistinguishable from any American tramp.

Beyond all ordinary help, Hughes was the supreme victim of affluence. He had no friends. When the Las Vegas Desert Inn hotel tried to throw him and his entourage out in 1966 to accommodate wealthy new years' guests, Hughes bought the place. Like King Lear, Hughes may have been a victim of his own delusions of power. But Lear, at least, had a late epiphany with his daughter Cordelia.

Was he any happier than Underhill, in his rented pigsty? Dollar for dollar, Howard Hughes was perhaps the most expensively miserable man of the 20th century. H

Richard Sugg is the author of 13 books, including *Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires* (KDP, 2020). He is currently completing *Talking Dirty: The History of Disgust from Jesus Christ to Donald Trump*

A century ago, America's simmering racial tensions boiled over on the streets of one Oklahoma city, leaving dozens dead and hundreds more injured. **Scott Ellsworth** explores what remains the worst single incident of racial violence in US history – the 1921 **Tulsa Race Massacre**

Ground zero

A man surveys the wreckage of homes in the Oklahoma city of Tulsa, June 1921. Two days of racist violence and destruction left what had been one of the United States' wealthiest black communities in ruins

Complements the BBC Radio 4 *Archive on 4* documentary **The Tulsa Tragedy that Shamed America**

BBC RADIO 4

GETTY IMAGES

Mary Parrish hurried home, anxious to finish a novel that she had begun the day before. During an era in which African-American women were routinely forced to the lowest levels of US society, Parrish stood out as a talented writer and successful entrepreneur: she ran her own secretarial school, where she taught typewriting, business correspondence and clerical skills to young black women hoping to find work as office clerks. Parrish was also a single mother, and she and her seven-year-old daughter, Florence, lived on Greenwood Avenue, in the heart of the Greenwood district of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Within walking distance from their home, there were two theatres, dozens of restaurants, a public library, grocery stores and dress shops, doctors' offices and billiard parlours. "On Greenwood one could find a variety of business places which would be a credit to any section of the town," Parrish wrote. Tuesday 31 May 1921 was a warm spring evening, and there was plenty to do and see.

Only Parrish wasn't interested. Fetching her daughter from a neighbour, the two climbed the stairs to their second-storey apartment. Little Florence took her place on the sofa along the windows, where she could watch the automobile and pedestrian traffic along Greenwood Avenue, while her mother sunk into her favourite chair, looking forward to a quiet evening of reading. That wasn't going to happen, though. Within a couple of hours, Florence would watch an unfolding drama outside, as African-American men and women, some with guns, gathered on the street below. And before the clock on the mantel struck midnight, Mary Parrish and her daughter would find themselves at ground zero in the worst single incident of racial violence in American history.

Less than 40 years old, Tulsa was then known as the "Magic City". Set along the banks of the Arkansas river in north-eastern Oklahoma, it had been a sleepy Creek Indian and cowboy town until 1905, when the discovery of the then richest small oil field on Earth transformed Tulsa into the oil capital of the world. By 1921, the city boasted skyscrapers, banks and movie theatres, churches with soaring steeples and more than 100,000 residents. In the wealthiest neighbourhoods, newly minted oil barons built massive Italianate and Tudor mansions and stocked them with antique furniture, crystal chandeliers and Renaissance art. Money had literally flowed out of the ground.

Tulsa's African-American citizens were able to carve out lives of dignity and, despite segregation, a degree of independence

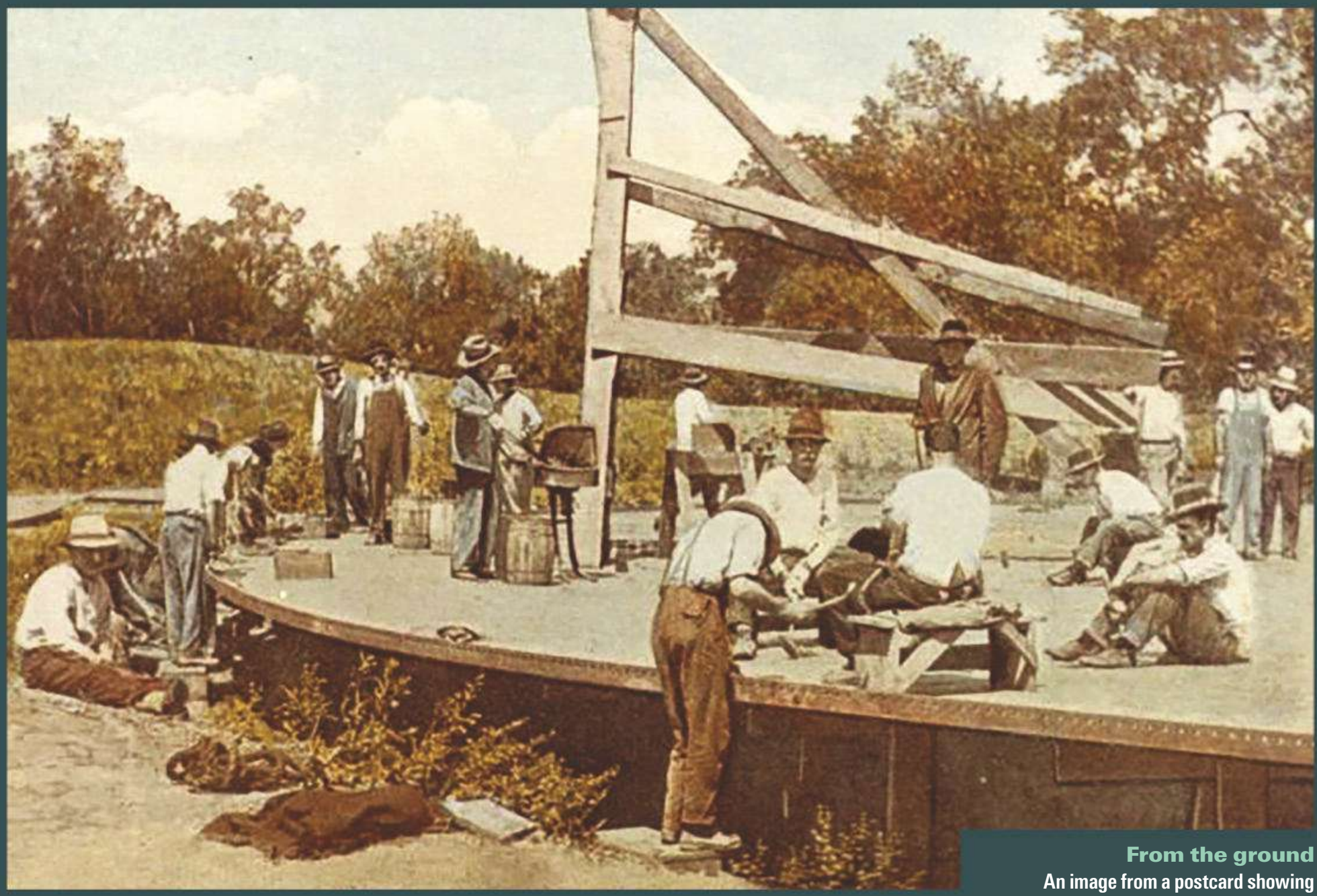
And some of it had made its way to the city's African-American population. While black people were barred from employment in the oil fields, there was plenty of work for African-American men and women as maids, domestic workers and chauffeurs in the homes of rich white people, or as cooks, dishwashers, ditch-diggers and common labourers downtown. Black Tulsans, including a large number of women, worked in white neighbourhoods during the week, where they drew good pay cheques, but they spent their money in the African-American community of Greenwood.

As a result, the Greenwood commercial district – later renamed Black Wall Street – flourished. A handful of black merchants, such as John and Loula Williams (who owned the Dreamland Theater, the East End Garage, a confectionery and an office building), became genuinely wealthy. But scores of other African-American entrepreneurs, who owned much more modest businesses, were also successful. More importantly, they helped each other. "It was said that a dollar bill changed hands more than a dozen times before it ever left Greenwood," newspaper editor Jim Goodwin once told me. As a result, the community was an especially vibrant district, whose residents were able to carve out lives of dignity and, despite segregation, a degree of independence. As John Williams would tell his young son: "I came out to the promised land."

But Greenwood's rise had also coincided with a treacherous decline in American race relations, one marked by a new and aggressively militant form of white racism. The Ku Klux Klan, the homegrown, whites-only terrorist organisation, had been revived in 1915. It was no longer limited to states in the South, but soon controlled state governments in New Jersey, Indiana and Oregon. Ivy League universities routinely taught forms of scientific racism, while motion pictures such as DW Griffith's 1915 *The Birth of a Nation* depicted African-American men as greedy savages who perpetually lusted after white women. Cities in the north started to segregate restaurants and theatres, while the president, Woodrow Wilson, began to

A 1920s postcard depicting Tulsa's skyscraper-studded skyline

TULSA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



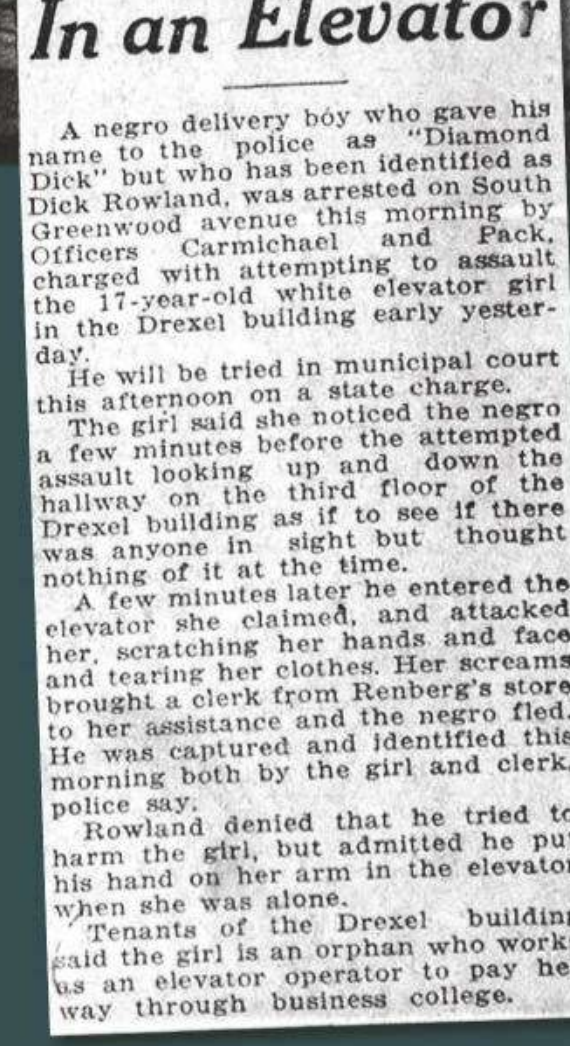
From the ground
An image from a postcard showing labourers in the oil fields near Tulsa. Although black people were forbidden from such work, they were still able to benefit from the ensuing wealth

Witnesses to a massacre
Mary Parrish and (below) her daughter Florence, as seen in photographs taken from Mary's 1922 account of the riots. Both narrowly escaped the violence that engulfed Tulsa

Racism on screen
A still from DW Griffiths' 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation*, which depicts African-American people – many played, as here, by white actors in blackface – as greedy savages

TULSA HISTORICAL SOCIETY/GETTY IMAGES

Mass destruction
A photo taken on 2 June 1921, showing the ruined city three weeks after the massacre. "More than 35 square blocks were a wasteland of ashes, charred foundations and blackened, leafless trees," writes Scott Ellsworth



Nab Negro for Attacking Girl In an Elevator

A negro delivery boy who gave his name to the police as "Diamond Dick" but who has been identified as Dick Rowland, was arrested on South Greenwood avenue this morning by Officers Carmichael and Pack, charged with attempting to assault the 17-year-old white elevator girl in the Drexel building early yesterday.

He will be tried in municipal court this afternoon on a state charge.

The girl said she noticed the negro a few minutes before the attempted assault looking up and down the hallway on the third floor of the Drexel building as if to see if there was anyone in sight but thought nothing of it at the time.

A few minutes later he entered the elevator she claimed, and attacked her, scratching her hands and face and tearing her clothes. Her screams brought a clerk from Renberg's store to her assistance and the negro fled. He was captured and identified this morning both by the girl and clerk, police say.

Rowland denied that he tried to harm the girl, but admitted he put his hand on her arm in the elevator when she was alone.

Tenants of the Drexel building said the girl is an orphan who works as an elevator operator to pay her way through business college.

Inciting a riot
The front-page story from the 31 May edition of the *Tulsa Tribune*, claiming that Dick Rowland had "attacked" Sarah Page. By 9pm that evening, an armed mob had gathered outside the city's courthouse

Devastating scene
Some of Tulsa's black residents search through the rubble of their former homes, June 1921. The losses that many families suffered were huge, and often felt for generations

ALAMY/TULSA TRIBUNE

bar black people from jobs in the federal government. Lynchings were far from uncommon, with some African-American victims getting burned at the stake by white mobs. And in the years surrounding the First World War, race riots broke out across the country, as white mobs attacked African-Americans on the streets, and invaded black communities, destroying homes and property.

How were African-Americans to respond to such violence? Many, especially black veterans who had fought in France during the First World War, believed that armed self-defence was the only answer. As one African-American veteran said near the time of the 1919 Chicago race riot: "I ain't looking for trouble, but if it comes my way I ain't dodging." These issues would loom large in Tulsa two years later.

Nineteen-year-old Dick Rowland had dropped out of Booker T Washington High School to take a job shining shoes downtown. There were no toilet facilities in the shine parlour where Rowland and the other African-American bootblacks worked, however, so the owner arranged for his employees to use a "colored" restroom in the Drexel Building, a block away on Main Street. To access the facilities, the shoe shiners would have to ride the elevator, operated by a 17-year-old white girl named Sarah Page, up to the top floor. On Monday 30 May 1921, that's exactly what Rowland set out to do, as he had dozens of times before.

Only something was different this time. As Rowland entered the lift, Page screamed. No one knows for certain what happened. But the likeliest explanation was that Rowland tripped as he stepped onto the elevator (it's been reported that the elevator often failed to line up with the various floors of the building) – and as he did so, instinctively threw out his hands to try to break the fall, catching the young elevator operator by the shoulder. Page cried out and Rowland, now terrified, ran from the building.

GETTY IMAGES

A heavy toll Injured people are taken to hospital by the US National Guard, 3 June 1921. As many as 300 are thought to have been killed in the rioting

Rather than stopping and disarming the white rioters, members of the Tulsa police instead deputised them and gave them guns

Tulsa police picked up Rowland at his mother's home in Greenwood the next day, 31 May, and placed him in a jail cell in the courthouse, while he was being arraigned. Sarah Page, meanwhile, refused to press charges. The incident, it seemed, was about to be forgotten.

But the *Tulsa Tribune*, the city's white afternoon newspaper, had other ideas. "Nab Negro for Attacking Girl in an Elevator" ran a front-page story of its 31 May edition, in which the newspaper claimed that Rowland had been seen stalking Page, and had "attacked her, scratching her hands and face, and tearing her clothes". The editors at the *Tribune* also proposed what should happen next, in a now lost editorial entitled "To Lynch Negro Tonight".

That was all it took. The first edition of the newspaper hit the streets shortly after 3.30pm. Within half an hour, there was lynch talk on the streets of Tulsa. By nine o'clock that night, a mob of more than 1,000 white people, many of them armed, had gathered outside the courthouse, demanding that the authorities hand over Dick Rowland.

In Greenwood, meanwhile, news of what was happening downtown had spread like wildfire. An African-American war veteran jumped up on stage at the Dreamland Theater and shouted: "We're not going to let this happen here! We're going to go downtown and stop this lynching. Close this place down."

Mary Parrish watched the drama unfold from her apartment. "I ran to the window and looked out," she remembered. "I saw many people gathered in little squads talking excitedly." A group of black veterans went home to put on their old army uniforms and gather their guns.

At about 10 o'clock, after hearing a rumour that the white lynch mob was storming the jail, 75 African-American veterans climbed into a caravan of automobiles and drove downtown. Presenting themselves at the courthouse, they offered their services to the sheriff to help defend the imprisoned Dick Rowland, but were turned away. As they were leaving, an elderly white man tried to take the gun from one of the black veterans. A shot went off, followed by another, and another. And with the gunplay, the white mob forgot about Rowland, and instead turned its wrath on anyone who was black.

Innocent African-Americans, likely workers finishing a late shift, were murdered downtown, while gangs of white people jumped into cars and did drive-by shootings along residential blocks in Greenwood, firing into homes on both sides of the street. Before midnight, the first fires had been set along the edges of the black district. Rather than stopping and disarming the white rioters, members of the Tulsa police instead deputised them and gave them guns. Greenwood's residents fought back, firing from behind windowsills and along the darkened streets. But shortly before dawn on 1 June, they faced an enemy far greater than ever before.

Just before sunrise, thousands of white people had gathered along the edges of the African-American district.

Out of the ashes African-American people pose outside temporary housing constructed in Tulsa by the American Red Cross following the massacre

Building back The historic Vernon AME Church in Greenwood, 2020. African-Americans rebuilt the community from the ground up after it was destroyed, and by the 1930s it was felt that Greenwood was even bigger than before

Armed with rifles, pistols and shotguns, and far outnumbering Greenwood's defenders, they soon moved en masse into the black neighbourhoods. "I took my little girl by the hand and fled out the west door on Greenwood," Mary Parrish later wrote, as bullets flew past them. "We expected to be shot down at any moment." Parrish and her daughter Florence made it out just in time, eventually finding safety out in the countryside.

Others were not so lucky. Black people who fought back were shot by the white mob, while those who came out with their hands up were led away, at gunpoint, to hastily organised internment centres. Once an African-American home or business had been emptied of its occupants, the white rioters then looted them before setting them on fire. All that morning, block by block, the mob of white people moved methodically across the black district, shooting, looting and burning.

By the time a contingent of state troops arrived later that morning from the state capital in Oklahoma City and martial law was declared, it was too late. Greenwood was gone. More than 1,000 African-American homes and businesses had been put to the torch; an elementary school, a hospital, a public library and more than a dozen churches had all been destroyed. More than 35 square blocks were a wasteland of ashes, charred foundations and blackened, leafless trees.

Dick Rowland was exonerated and set free, while an all-white grand jury blamed African-Americans for the violence. No white person was ever tried and convicted for the burning, looting, and killing that took place in Tulsa in the spring of 1921.

No white person was ever tried and convicted for the burning, looting and killing that took place in Tulsa in the spring of 1921

Incredibly, Greenwood rose again. Despite an attempt by white government officials to move the district further north, African-Americans stayed put. Living, at first, in tents provided by the American Red Cross, black men and women went back to their jobs in the white community, while African-American merchants started up their businesses again, first on the bare ground, then in wooden shanties. Some of the wealthiest black business people had kept their money in white banks downtown, and using that capital, started constructing replacement buildings for those burned in the fires of 1 June. By the 1930s and 1940s, it was felt that Greenwood was, in fact, even bigger than before. There was even a black-owned bus line.

Despite the rebuilding, the economic loss suffered by Tulsa's African-American community was immense. For many families, their savings were wiped out along with their homes and businesses – and with them, generational wealth that could have been used for college tuition, retirement income and down payments on first homes and new business ventures. By some recent estimates, if measured by the wealth that would have remained in Greenwood had the community not been burned to the ground during the massacre, African-American losses in Tulsa would top £440m in today's currency.

TULSA HISTORICAL SOCIETY/GETTY IMAGES

Veneice Dunn Simms, who survived the Tulsa Race Massacre, pictured in 1999. Many survivors suffered from PTSD for decades after the attack

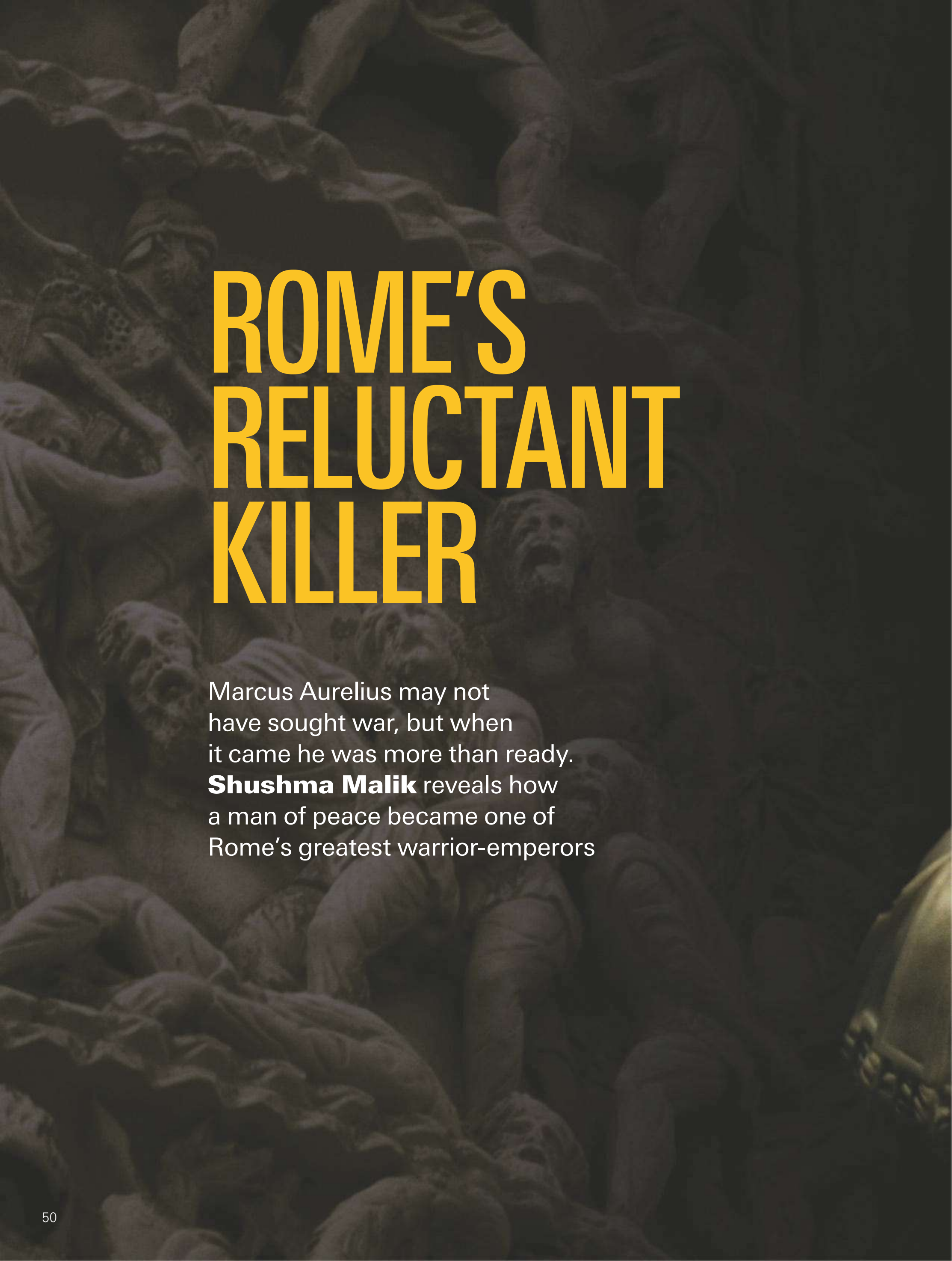
Of course, there were other losses as well, including PTSD suffered by black survivors for decades. As late as the 1970s, one survivor even kept a loaded rifle by the front door to his home in Greenwood, "in case it should happen again". Others forged ahead, creating new lives for themselves and their families, literally on the ashes of their pre-massacre lives. But the old Greenwood was not entirely forgotten, in part thanks to Mary Parrish. Less than two years after the massacre, she published *Events of the Tulsa Disaster*, the first book on the tragedy. This was an exceedingly rare volume (it was said that fewer than 50 were ever printed), with an original copy selling at auction last year for more than £1,800. Later this spring, Trinity University Press in San Antonio, Texas will publish a new edition of Parrish's small but vital account of the attack.

To this day, no one knows how many people died in the Tulsa race massacre. In 2000, as part of a state commission investigating the tragedy, renowned forensic anthropologist Dr Clyde Snow used funeral home records, death certificates, and other historical sources to confirm at least 39 casualties – 13 white people and 26 African-Americans. But many believe that the actual death count is much higher. Maurice Willows, who directed the relief efforts of the American Red Cross in Greenwood after the catastrophe, hinted that the death count might be as high as 300. And while the events that took place in Tulsa in 1921 are now referred to as a race massacre, the ratio of black to white deaths is likewise still unknown. WD Williams, whose family owned the Dreamland Theater, told me in the 1970s that "we got as many of them as they got of us".

Some answers, however, may be on the way. I have been helping to lead a team of historians, archaeologists and forensic scientists who are attempting to identify long-rumoured unmarked graves around Tulsa. Last October, we discovered one such site in a cemetery. This June, we plan on exhuming the human remains there, which will then be studied for age, sex, ethnicity, cause of death and, possibly, using DNA analysis, actual identification. The victims will then be reburied and – a century on from this horrific episode in Tulsa's history – properly memorialised. H

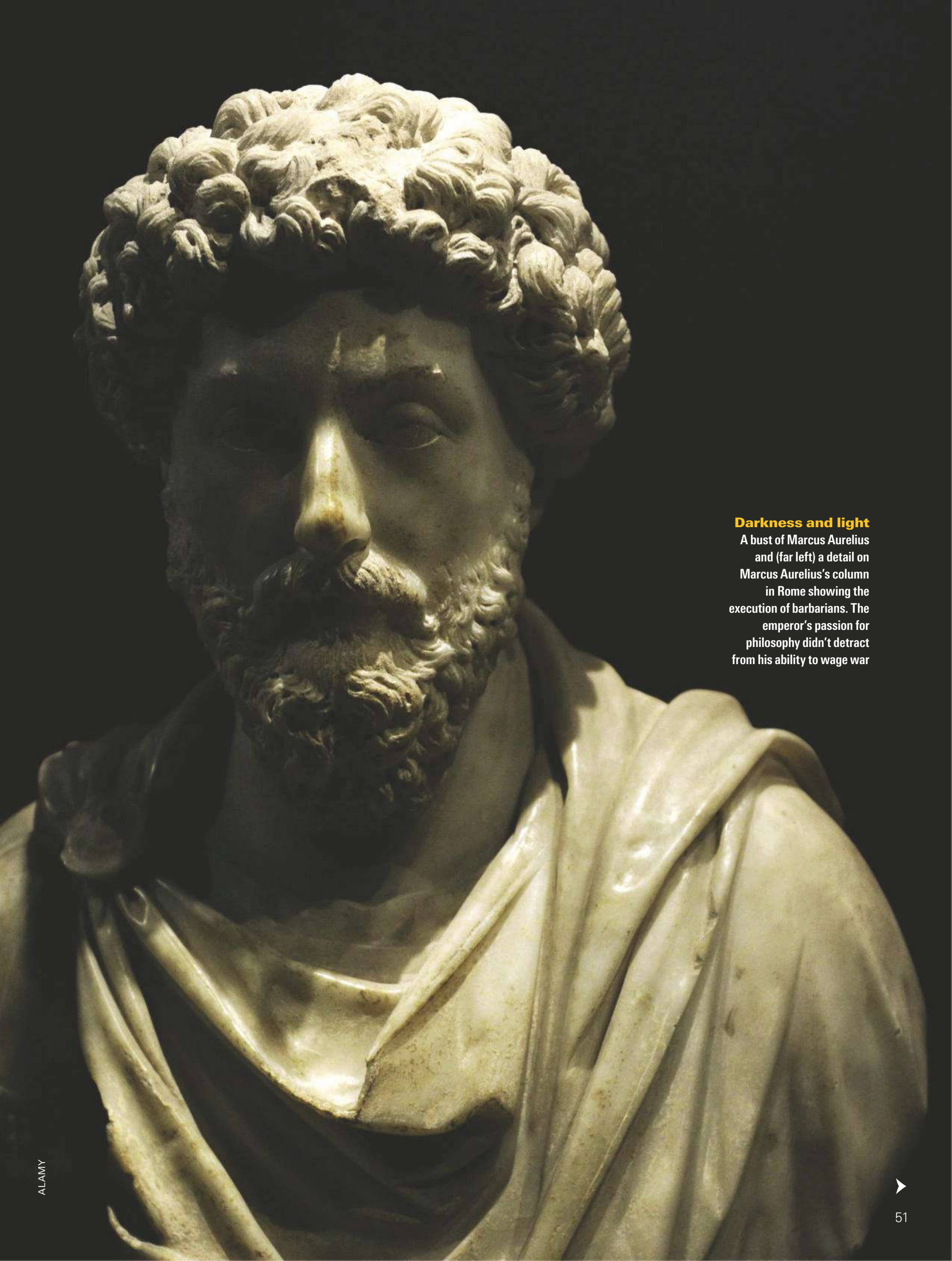
Scott Ellsworth is the author of *The Ground Breaking: The Tulsa Race Massacre and an American City's Search for Justice* (Icon Books, 2021)

LISTEN The BBC Radio 4 *Archive on 4* documentary **The Tulsa Tragedy that Shamed America** is airing on 29 May



ROME'S RELUCTANT KILLER

Marcus Aurelius may not
have sought war, but when
it came he was more than ready.
Shushma Malik reveals how
a man of peace became one of
Rome's greatest warrior-emperors



Darkness and light
A bust of Marcus Aurelius and (far left) a detail on Marcus Aurelius's column in Rome showing the execution of barbarians. The emperor's passion for philosophy didn't detract from his ability to wage war

ALAMY

A silver lining
A relief on Marcus Aurelius's column depicts the "rain miracle" of AD 172, when a storm reportedly saved one of the emperor's legions from annihilation

Groomed for power
A bust of Marcus Aurelius made during his time as successor to the imperial throne – a position he acquired on the insistence of Emperor Hadrian

It was the campaign season of AD 172, and one of Emperor Marcus Aurelius's legions found itself staring into the face of disaster. After a series of hard-fought battles along the Roman empire's north-eastern borders, the Roman soldiers found themselves holed up in enemy territory surrounded by a hostile group known as the Quadi. The legion put up a good fight but it had a problem: a chronic lack of water. The Quadi were confident that, if they kept the enemy enclosed, thirst would soon overcome them. And the Quadi's confidence appeared to be justified.

The sun beat down unrelentingly. Water began to run out. "The Romans," Cassius Dio tells us, "were in a terrible plight from fatigue, wounds, the heat of the sun, and thirst, and so could neither fight nor retreat."

But then something remarkable happened: as if by some divine intervention, a storm broke over the beleaguered legion. Soon, so much rain was tumbling from the skies that the Roman soldiers were able to fill their shields and helmets with water and quench their horses' thirst.

As for the Quadi, they were assailed by a barrage of hailstones, lightning and thunderbolts. Such was the assault from the heavens on their ranks that some of the Quadi abandoned their own side and went over to join the Romans. The threat to Marcus Aurelius's trapped legion was averted.

But who or what was responsible for the "rain miracle", as this dramatic episode in Marcus Aurelius's 19-year reign as Roman emperor is now known? Cassius Dio says it can be accounted for by the invocations of Arnuphis, an Egyptian magician who had caused Mercury (the god of the air) to send rain to the legion's aid. Other sources disagree. But whatever the veracity of Dio's claim, the "rain miracle" offers us a fascinating window into the remarkable life of Marcus Aurelius.

Here was a leader forced to face down a succession of deadly threats from the moment he assumed power in AD 161 to the day he died in AD 180. Unrest on the borders with Parthia in the east, wars on the banks of the Rhine and Danube in the north, a violent uprising headed by one of his governors: all threatened to pitch the empire into chaos. Yet Marcus Aurelius successfully negotiated them all.

The irony is that today, 1,900 years after his birth, Marcus Aurelius is relatively little known for his wars. The greater irony still is that, when Marcus Aurelius *is* recalled in the 21st century, it is chiefly as the first true philosopher-emperor, the man who wrote a collection of personal notes and ideas on Stoic philosophy known as the *Meditations*. As a result, one of Rome's prolific warrior-emperors has gone down in history as a man of peace.

Marcus's interest in philosophy is undeniable. He spent his formative years immersed in study and, as well as developing a keen interest in Stoicism, he was well versed in the works of rival schools, including those of Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus. How to live the most virtuous life possible while also participating in imperial politics was something he often debated.

But the fact is, the violent two decades in which Marcus ruled left him little choice but

Plague, border wars and insurrection all threatened to pitch Marcus Aurelius's empire into chaos

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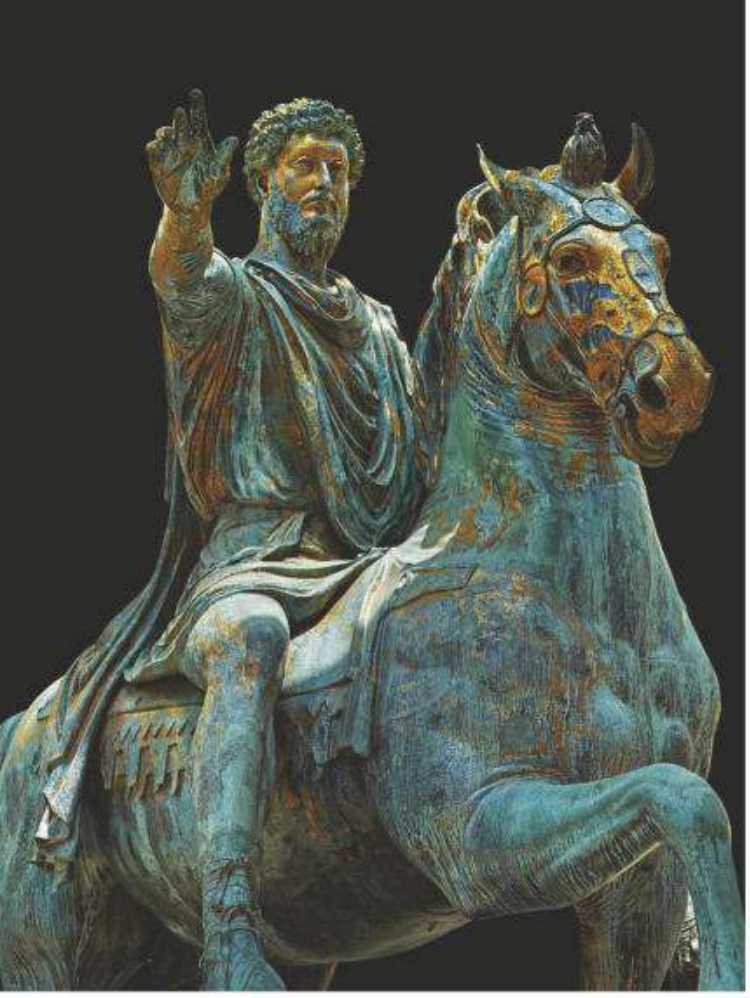

Riding high
An equestrian statue of Marcus as emperor. Years earlier, Hadrian had nominated the young Marcus to be enrolled into Rome's equestrian order

Cut off in his prime
Lucius Verus, Marcus's co-emperor (above), proved himself a capable military leader before his life was cut short (possibly) by plague

An easy ride
A relief of Marcus's predecessor and adoptive father, Emperor Antoninus Pius, whose reign saw comparatively little warfare

to take up the sword. The monumental column erected in Rome shortly after his death emphasises the brutality of the conflicts in which he was embroiled. Marcus Aurelius may not have been a natural-born warrior, but the facts suggest that he was willing to lead his armies from the front – and did so successfully.

Modesty and manliness

Marcus Aurelius was born in Rome in AD 121 to Marcus Annius Verus and the younger Domitia Lucilla. His maternal grandmother, the elder Domitia Lucilla, was extremely wealthy, and the younger Lucilla inherited much of the family's fortune. Marcus Aurelius's father could boast of senators and consuls among his ancestors. But for all that, Marcus was not the product of one of Rome's most prominent lines.

Marcus lost his father at a young age, after which he was adopted by his grandfather, also Marcus Annius Verus. Marcus Aurelius writes about the influence of his relatives in the first book of his *Meditations*. From his grandfather, he learned "nobility of character and evenness of temper", and from the reputation of his father he acquired "modesty and manliness". His mother taught him "piety and generosity, and to abstain not only from doing wrong but even from contemplating such an act; and the simplicity, too, of her way of life, far removed from that of the rich".

The young Marcus caught the attention of the ruling emperor Hadrian quickly, probably owing to his grandfather's status. In AD 126, Annius Verus had been appointed consul for the third time, making him the first man to be awarded this honour by Hadrian. When Marcus was six, Hadrian nominated him to be enrolled into the equestrian order, and at seven years old Marcus was enrolled into the priestly college of the Salii by the emperor. Yet the emperor's patronage of Marcus wasn't to end there. Not long before his death in AD 138, Hadrian adopted Aurelius Antoninus, the son-in-law of Marcus's grandfather, as his successor. At the same time, he required Antoninus to adopt Marcus and the young aristocrat Lucius Verus as his own heirs. Marcus's future now lay on the imperial throne.

When Hadrian died in AD 138, Antoninus became emperor (as Antoninus Pius) and Marcus married the new ruler's daughter, Faustina. Marcus held his adoptive father in the highest regard, writing in his *Meditations* that he was gentle, just and modest, "put[ting] a curb on public acclimation and every kind of flattery during his reign". Antoninus Pius's reign saw little significant warfare, and the emperor chose to stay close to Rome. The sources suggest that Marcus Aurelius might have been happier presiding over a similar period of imperial peace, but he was not to be so lucky.

In AD 161, Emperor Antoninus Pius died and was succeeded by Marcus and Lucius Verus as joint rulers (Rome's first co-emperors). That same year, the Parthian king Vologaeses III (or IV) invaded Armenia and installed his own king, Pacorus, in the Roman-protected territory. In response to this act of aggression, the co-emperors reasoned that one of them needed to go to the eastern border in person. They decided upon Lucius Verus, but our two main literary sources diverge on the reasons why. Cassius Dio (who began his political career during

TIMELINE

The life of Marcus Aurelius

AD 121 Marcus Aurelius is born to parents **Marcus Annius Verus and Domitia Lucilla**.

138 Marcus is **adopted by Antoninus Pius**. Shortly after, on the death of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius becomes emperor.

161 Marcus becomes **co-emperor with Lucius Verus**. His wife, **Faustina**, gives birth to twins, one of whom dies in 165.

168 As plague ravages Rome, **Marcus and Lucius head north**. They station themselves in Aquileia at the tip of the Adriatic.

169 Lucius Verus dies, possibly of plague. Marcus Aurelius is now **Rome's sole emperor**.

c170 **The Quadi and Marcomanni invade** north Italy and lay siege to Aquileia.

171–74 Marcus leads a series of campaigns against, and diplomatic negotiations with, **groups from the other side of the Rhine and Danube**. One of his legions is saved by the "rain miracle".

175 **Avidius Cassius**, governor of Syria, rebels, but is killed by a centurion loyal to Marcus.

180 Marcus Aurelius dies on the northern frontier and is **succeeded by his son Commodus**.

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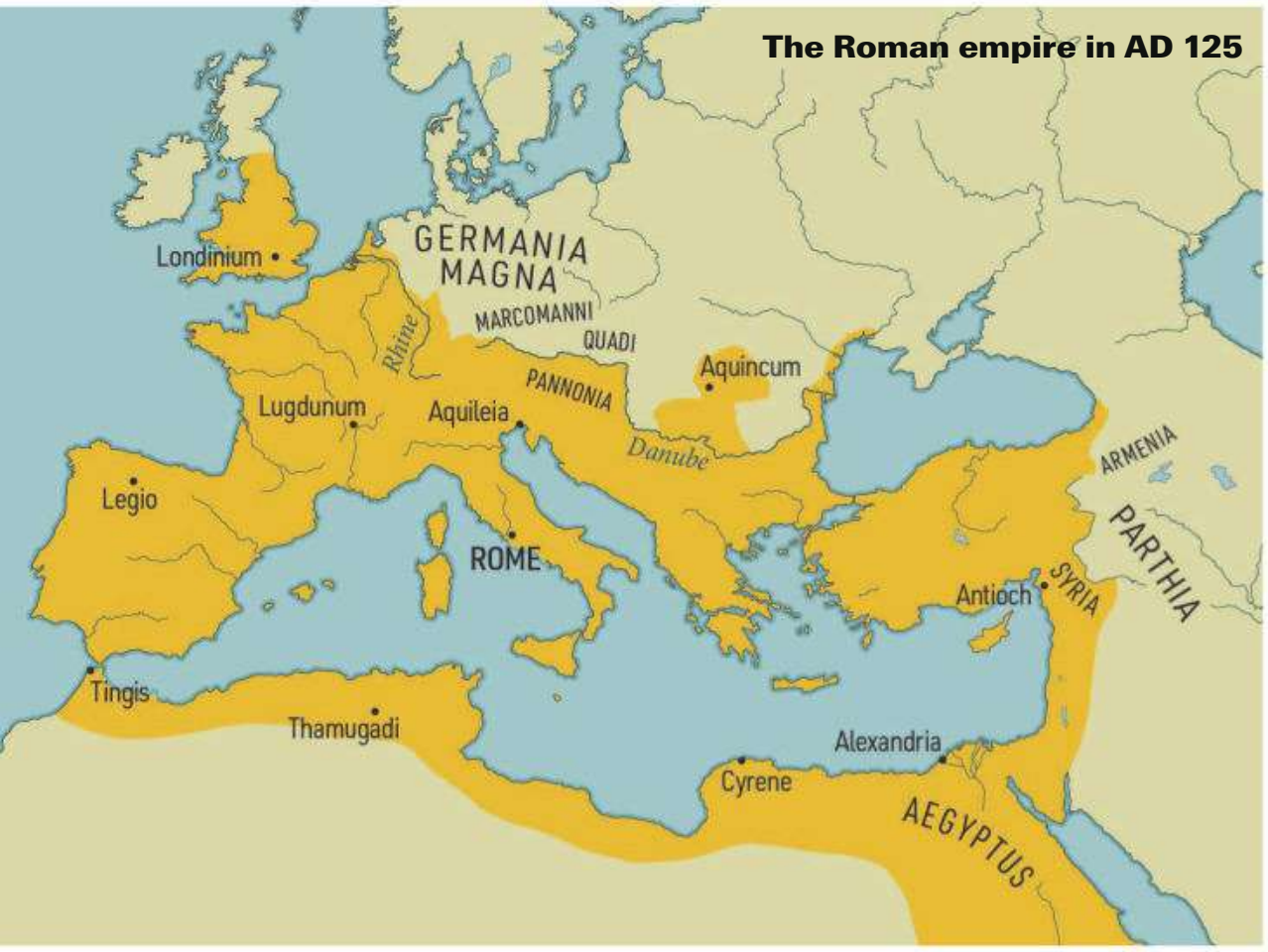

Spoiling for a fight Trophies of war shown on Trajan's Column in Rome. Marcus Aurelius's reign was marked by conflict in the north and east of his vast empire

the reign of Marcus Aurelius's son Commodus) suggests that Marcus was too physically weak for military duty, whereas Lucius was 10 years younger and full of vigour. The author of the *Historia Augusta* (probably writing in the fifth century) says Marcus sent Lucius away to fight because he was worried about his adopted brother's natural tendency towards vice, and thought that the fear of war would do him good.

If the latter was the case, Marcus's plan did not go quite as he envisaged, as Lucius lingered in Greece and coastal towns in Asia Minor to enjoy entertainments such as gladiatorial spectacles and hunting. However, once he'd set up headquarters in Antioch, Lucius oversaw a series of victories over the Parthians – and returned to Rome in triumph. For their efforts in putting down the uprising, both emperors were awarded the "civic crown" by the senate (for having saved citizens' lives) and given the title *pater patriae* (father of the fatherland).

The two sides of a coin marking Marcus Aurelius's triumph over his German enemies, achieved by late AD 171. The tail side (right) depicts the personification of Victory, with the inscription VIC GER (victory over the Germans)

Wagons for the dead

The combination of Marcus Aurelius handling matters of politics, law and administration at home and Lucius Verus overseeing military activity on the frontier seems to have worked well against the Parthians. But the jubilation did not last for long. Sometime in the late AD 160s, plague (now known as the Antonine plague) had been introduced to Rome, possibly by troops returning from Mesopotamia. The author of the *Historia Augusta* describes a scene of chaos and destruction in the city as the "the dead were removed in carts and wagons".

Both emperors remained in the imperial capital for as long as they could to manage the tragedy. Nevertheless, in the spring of AD 168, they set off towards the north, and for a time used Aquileia at the northern tip of the Adriatic as a base from which to go back and forth to the frontier. Then, in early AD 169, calamity struck: Lucius was taken sick in his carriage and died three days later (possibly a victim of plague). Marcus took his dead co-emperor's body back to Rome for burial. In late summer 169, he headed back to the front as the sole emperor.

Campaigning began again after the winter of 169–70 had passed. The remaining evidence makes it hard to put together a clear narrative of events, but a fourth-century historian, Ammianus Marcellinus, suggests that two more enemy groups, the aforementioned Quadi and the Marcomanni, invaded Italy and laid siege to Aquileia. Not since the days of Hannibal during the wars between Rome and Carthage in the third century BC had Italy experienced a foreign military so close to home. But Marcus Aurelius was up to the challenge.

Not since the days of Hannibal's wars with Rome had Italy experienced a foreign army so close to home

By late 171, the Romans, now led by Marcus in person, appear to have pushed the invaders far enough back to celebrate a military triumph. Coins were minted in Rome bearing the personification of Victory on the reverse, along with the inscription VIC GER (victory over the Germans, ie the Marcomanni).

Marcus Aurelius remained in Pannonia to receive embassies from the different groups. The Quadi were ready to make peace, and Marcus granted their request in the hope that it would separate them from the Marcomanni. Other groups were granted similar treaties

AKG-IMAGES/TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Seat of power Marcus Aurelius (on horseback) meets defeated barbarians in a second-century relief. By AD 175, the emperor had seen off the threat posed by restive enemies

Wife and enemy? Faustina, Marcus Aurelius's wife, was accused of engineering an uprising against her husband – a charge often levelled against the female members of imperial families

Next in line Commodus, son of Marcus Aurelius, accompanied his father on campaign in the AD 170s before succeeding him as emperor

and possibly even settled in Italy, but the Marcomanni in particular remained a potential threat. And so, in AD 172 – the year of the "rain miracle" – Marcus and his army went on the offensive, into the territory on the other side of the Danube. Coins minted in Rome show troops crossing over a bridge.

Marcus's willingness to negotiate with the Quadi and others was in line with his fair treatment of the enemy, or so Cassius Dio suggests. But even a ruler as apparently even-handed as Marcus Aurelius was moved to rage when the Quadi failed to keep to the terms of their agreement. So furious was Marcus with the backsliding of the Quadi's new king, Ariogaesus, that he issued an uncharacteristically splenetic outburst "to the effect that anyone who brought him in alive should receive a thousand gold pieces, and anyone who slew him and exhibited his head, 500".

Sick on campaign

Marcus's next major challenge came not from an enemy across the Rhine or Danube, but from another Roman. In AD 175, such was Marcus's successes against the Marcomanni and the Quadi that he was in a position to turn their territory into a new Roman province. But the emperor had to abandon his plans when he heard that the governor of Syria, Avidius Cassius, had rebelled.

The sources suggest that Cassius's insurrection was prompted by Marcus's wife, Faustina, because she feared that Marcus had become sick on campaign and was on the point of death (or had possibly already died). Faustina feared that her 13-year-old son, Commodus, was too young to succeed and may have reasoned that it was better for her to remarry before Marcus's death, so she could protect Commodus from usurpers. The veracity of this story is questioned by the author of the *Historia Augusta*, who cites letters between Marcus Aurelius and Faustina that vindicate the empress.

While it is difficult to know whether the letters are genuine, it's certainly common for the female members of imperial families to come under suspicion when ancient historians assign blame for conspiracies. Either way, Cassius was received as emperor in Egypt in May 175. This was a truly perilous development for Marcus, as it was from Egypt that Rome sourced most of its grain supply.

Marcus now summoned Commodus to join him and prepared for a civil war. Cassius Dio then records a speech (which he claims was also sent to the senate) that Marcus delivered to his troops, whom he addresses as his "fellow soldiers". He expressed regret that so many wars had been conducted during his reign and that civil war had become a threat. He urged the troops that the best course of action, should Cassius be captured, would be "to forgive a man who has wronged one, to remain a friend to one who has transgressed friendship, to continue faithful to one who has broken faith".

But Marcus was not afforded this opportunity to show mercy. As his soldiers were about to depart, news was brought that Cassius had been killed by a centurion named Antonius. With the help of a cavalry officer, Antonius had stabbed Cassius in the neck, and then cut off his head to present to Marcus. The emperor refused to look at the head and had it buried.

With civil war averted, a significant part of Marcus's final years was spent back on those same northern borders, protecting his empire from further violent incursions. It was as the campaign season was about to begin in AD 180 that Marcus became seriously ill. He died in March of that year, at the age of 58.

In his *Meditations*, Marcus stresses the importance of accepting death for what he thinks it is – the decisive end not only of a life, but also of a reputation. "Never cease to observe how evanescent are all things human, and how worthless: today a drop of mucus, and tomorrow a mummy or a pile of ash." Instead, he counselled, a person must live in the present, paying attention to make sure they lead the best and most virtuous life possible at any given moment.

On a day-to-day basis, Marcus did what he thought he had to do for Rome as its emperor – he managed the administration the best he could, and he steered the troops to and from the front. His focus on present life over enduring reputation perhaps indicates his uneasiness with the violent reality of war. Yet for him, as emperor in the turbulent 160s and 170s AD, conflict was unavoidable. Marcus's words seek to reassure himself and others that people – even rulers of a mighty empire – can only play the hand they are dealt by divine reason. H

Shushma Malik is a lecturer in the School of Humanities at the University of Roehampton. She will be discussing Marcus Aurelius on our podcast: *historyextra.com/podcast*

LISTEN You can hear Melvyn Bragg and guests talk about the life and legacy of Marcus Aurelius on BBC Radio 4's **In Our Time** at *bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000sjxt*

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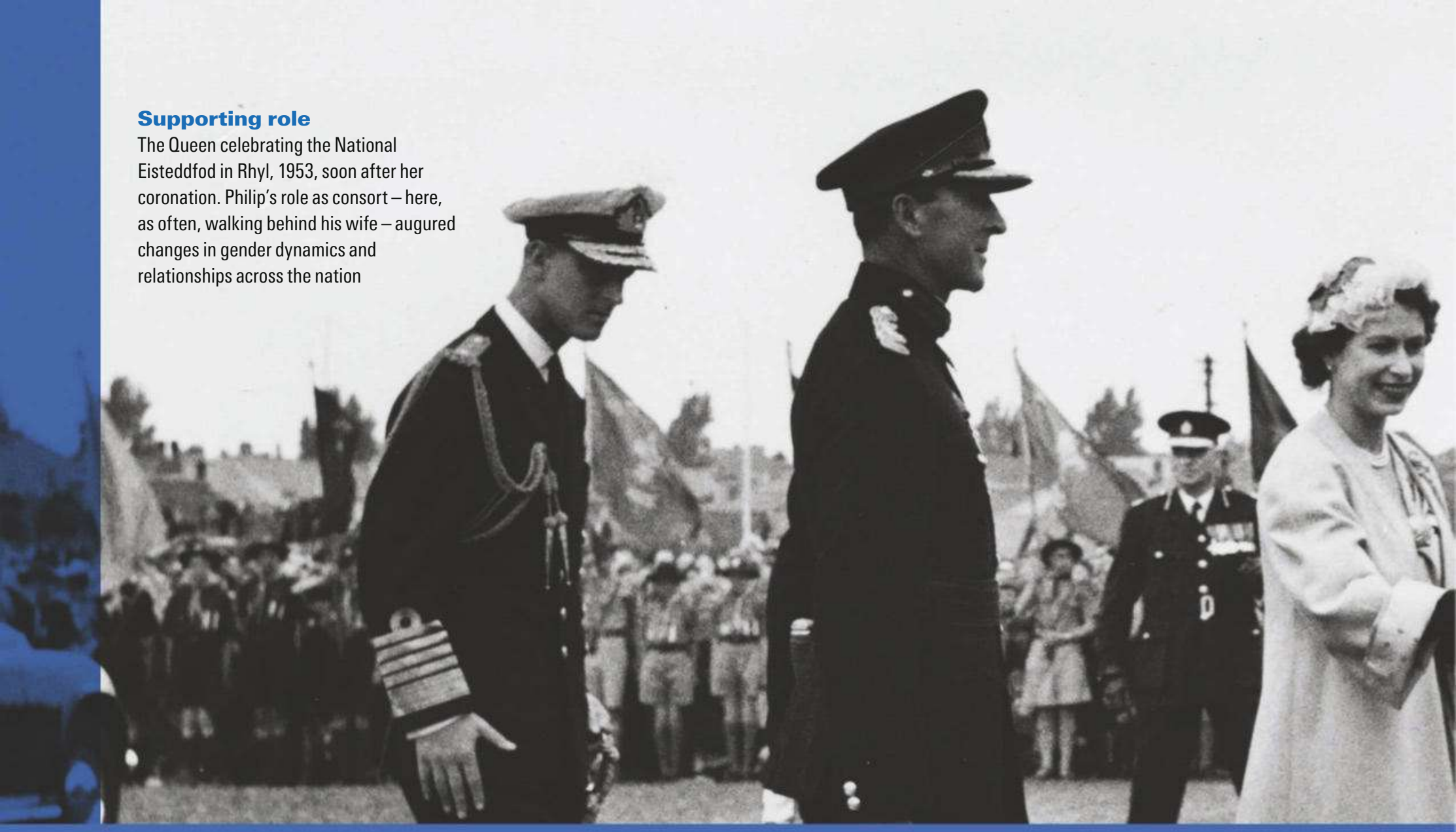

Supporting role
The Queen celebrating the National Eisteddfod in Rhyl, 1953, soon after her coronation. Philip's role as consort – here, as often, walking behind his wife – augured changes in gender dynamics and relationships across the nation

THE PRINCE PHILIP YEARS

TOPFOTO/PA IMAGES

Following the death of Britain's longest-serving royal consort, **Alwyn Turner** charts how the country transformed beyond recognition during the Duke of Edinburgh's lifetime

Strength in diversity
The Queen and Prince Philip join a pageant during her golden jubilee in 2002. Philip played a key role in the reinvention of the nation's self-image, combining tradition and modernity

Changing roles
Prince Philip pays homage to the Queen during her coronation on 2 June 1953. This was an example of how Philip's life embodied societal shifts

At their wedding in 1947, Princess Elizabeth vowed to love, cherish and obey Philip Mountbatten – the Duke of Edinburgh, as he'd become the previous day. The use of the word "obey" by the future monarch raised some eyebrows at the time, though the respective ranks of the couple were spelled out six years later at the Queen's coronation, when Philip knelt before his wife and swore "to become your liege man of life and limb". It was, said the *Daily Mirror*, "one of the ceremony's most moving moments".

This action wasn't entirely unprecedented, but you had to go back to the coronation of Queen Anne in 1702 to find the only other example of a royal husband paying such homage in public. And this time it truly was public. It was estimated that some 20 million people in Britain watched the television coverage of the service (there were only 2 million licences at the time), and that 88 per cent of the nation was watching or listening to the BBC's broadcasts. At the sight of a man kneeling before his wife, reported one newspaper, "a noticeable stir ran through the congregation", and there was a similar frisson in households around the country.

Look of love
Princess Elizabeth and her husband, the newly styled Duke of Edinburgh, share smiles on their wedding day, 20 November 1947. Her promise to "obey" him raised eyebrows

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It was one of the many ways Prince Philip's life reflected wider changes that were happening in the 20th century. From changing gender roles to an increasing focus on protecting the environment, huge cultural shifts took place in the Duke of Edinburgh's lifetime – shifts that he was a part of.

In the case of gender roles, the symbolism of Philip's deference to the Queen was out of keeping with the times. Women were neither seen nor heard very much in public life during this period. In the 1951 general election, only 77 female candidates had stood, of whom just 17 were elected; fewer than 3 per cent of MPs were women. There was a generational factor, too. The average age of the three main party leaders in that election was 71, and the new prime minister, Winston Churchill, was the oldest of them all. These were men who'd been born at the height of Victoria's rule. Now, the youngest monarch in more than a century was on the throne, and a woman was at the head of the national family.

Philip's subsequent role, two paces behind his wife, was not necessarily to become familiar – maybe only Denis Thatcher came close – but the greatest revolution of the new Elizabethan age has undoubtedly been in the position and visibility of women. The Queen

Increasing numbers
Women use calculating machines in a British office in the 1950s. The proportion of women of working age in employment soared from about one-third in the fifties to more than 70 per cent today

ALAMY

is no longer such a glaring exception to the male-only rules, and it would be easier to list the really senior establishment posts that have not been occupied by a woman – archbishop of Canterbury, governor of the Bank of England, director-general of the BBC – than those that have. To return to that example of parliament, the 2019 general election saw 220 female MPs returned – just over one-third of the Commons. To use a wider measure, at the time of the coronation in 1953, around one-third of women of working age were in employment; today that figure is more than 70 per cent. Although we are not yet an equal society, the hard-fought progress has been impressive.

Revolution in relationships

The impact of this revolution has been enormous, in terms of legislation, social attitudes and personal relations. And the values of society have been transformed – the things that we collectively consider to be important. Most notably, there has been a sea change in the role of marriage.

In 1992, French philosopher Jacques Derrida – father of deconstruction theory – was awarded an honorary degree by the University of Cambridge. Called upon to present the award, Prince Philip was heard to observe that if he wanted to see deconstruction, he need look no further than his own family. This was the year – dubbed an *annus horribilis* by the Queen – when the marriages of three of their children were publicly acknowledged to have broken up.

At the time of Philip's wedding, there had been a spike in the divorce rate as wartime unions turned sour

At the time of Philip's wedding, there had been a spike in the divorce rate. Many wartime unions, entered into in haste and under threat of imminent extinction, proved unable to survive the trials of separation, reunion or both. Despite the special circumstances, those of a traditional cast of mind were concerned that the practice might become embedded in society. "The nation is suffering," said Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher in 1951, "from the disregard of monogamy, the multiplication of divorces… and the evil of broken homes."

It was also in 1951 that Labour MP Eirene White introduced the Matrimonial Causes Bill, which would have allowed for divorce on grounds of irretrievable breakdown, even if one partner did not wish it. That bill never made it onto the statute book, however – it was opposed by White's own government, which instead set up a royal commission to look at reform.

Wartime wedding A soldier on leave marries his fiancée in Berkshire in 1942. Many couples who married in haste during the Second World War found the challenges of separation or subsequent reunion too much to overcome, and divorce rates spiked around the time of Philip's own wedding in 1947

Split decision
Labour MP Eirene White, whose Matrimonial Causes Bill 1951 was opposed by her own government. Ultimately, many of her proposed changes did become law

A fragile fairytale
Charles and Diana appear distant during a visit to South Korea in 1992, just weeks before their separation was announced – the end of a union initially hailed as a royal fairytale. Philip was reportedly baffled by his son's behaviour

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The commission's report was gloomy. "Old restraints, such as social penalties on sexual relations outside marriage, have been weakened, and new ideals to take their place are still in process of formation," it said. "It is perhaps inevitable that at such a time there should be a tendency to regard the assertion of one's own individuality as a right, and to pursue one's personal satisfaction, reckless of the consequences to others."

The number of divorces rose steadily during the 1960s and, at the end of the decade, the Divorce Reform Act 1969 – looking very much like Eirene White's bill – finally opened the floodgates. In the year before the act was passed, 46,000 divorces were granted in England and Wales; by the 1990s, that figure had more than trebled – with seven out of ten cases initiated by women. More recently it's fallen back, dipping below 100,000 a year on occasion, but only because the marriage rate (calculated as a proportion of marriages per head of the unmarried population) has collapsed. In 1947, the year of Philip's wedding, 73 of every 1,000 unmarried men got married; that proportion is now around 20 in every 1,000.

This is a profound shift. Partly it's related to a decline in religion – fewer than one in four weddings now include a religious ceremony – but the traditional emphasis on marriage went far beyond faith. It was seen as the keystone of the family, which in turn was the basic building block of society. Remove that, some feared, and might not the entire social structure come crashing down?

It was striking, for example, that Margaret Thatcher – then an opposition MP – voted against the Divorce Reform Act, even though she was herself married to one of those wartime divorcees. Around the same time, she voted in favour of liberalising reforms on homosexuality and abortion – yet making divorce easier was a step too far, the real threat to social stability. Despite Thatcher's espousal of Victorian values, though, the divorce rate still increased (albeit slowly) in the 1980s, during her premiership. So, too, did the number of single-parent households and the number of children living in those households, both growing by two-thirds.

Philip's own extraordinarily long-lasting marriage perhaps did not well equip him to understand this new world; he was reportedly bewildered by Charles's separation from Diana. In common with many of his generation, he seemed to find the behaviour of his children baffling and self-indulgent. Just as typically, though, he accepted and adjusted.

The fears of the 1950s and 60s haven't materialised. Society hasn't collapsed as a consequence of widespread divorce, seen in all classes, and the consequent downplaying of marriage. But the country is a very different place as a result, with moral standards about personal relations and domestic life that would have seemed alien in those postwar years. Alongside this has come a new emphasis on the personal rather than the political, as Britain has moved from empire to empathy.

Natural leader
Prince Philip attends a conference in 1995 as WWF's international president. His long-standing environmental concerns were reflected in his six decades supporting the nature charity

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As the agenda of environmentalism evolved over time, so too did the issues that Prince Philip addressed

Custodians of the planet

If the dominant trend of the last 70 years has been towards individualism, there has also been a parallel rise in globalisation. At its most positive, this has seen the return of an old ethos of humans as the custodians of the planet.

Among the cornerstones of the modern environmental movement is WWF (World Wildlife Fund or World Wide Fund for Nature), committed to combating the loss of habitats and species, both animal and plant. The British National Appeal for the WWF was launched in 1961, with Prince Philip as president (he later became international president); within two months it had attracted sufficient funds to begin making grants to conservation projects.

As the agenda of environmentalism evolved over time, so too did the issues that Philip addressed. In 1972, he wrote of concerns that catastrophe was looming, citing "problems of overpopulation, environmental pollution, depletion of finite resources and the threat of widespread starvation". By the 1990s, he was driving around London in a black cab he'd bought that had been converted to run on liquid gas. And in 1995 he founded the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, a global initiative encouraging religious bodies to adopt eco-friendly approaches to their work.

The ecological revolution remains unfinished business. It is still unclear how far humanity will – maybe how far it can – accept the underlying challenge to the doctrine of economic growth, the pursuit of which has been at the heart of political thinking of all hues for so long. What is certain is that the debate hasn't gone away – and that had been a real fear in the early days. In a speech in 1970, Prince Charles expressed concern about "the whole thing being a temporary craze which reaches a peak of over-emphasis and then deflates itself rapidly".

Today, Charles continues to pursue environmental issues even more loudly than his father did, and perhaps the ideological differences between the two illustrate a cultural changing of the guard. Philip was pragmatic about, say, the question of

Home movie

The 1969 documentary *Royal Family* revealed the Windsors' home and working life. Philip reportedly persuaded the Queen to allow the fly-on-the-wall television film, which was criticised by some and is said to be unofficially banned

The princes' trust

Charles and his father chat during the filming of *Royal Family*. Unlike his son, who spoke about the breakdown of his marriage during a widely publicised 1994 television interview, Philip asserted that "I've never discussed private matters"

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Family drama
Prince Harry and Meghan Markle are joined by the Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Philip at Sandringham in 2017. Harry and Meghan's recent Oprah Winfrey interview shows that the line between private and public has increasingly blurred

genetically modified food: it's no different to selective breeding, he argued. Charles' vision allows less room for technology and scientific solutions. Genetic engineering of plants, he said, would take us "into realms that belong to God, and to God alone".

Spoiling the magic?

While the royal family's support of environmental issues has received an unequivocally positive reception, the broadcast of *Royal Family* in 1969 has often been considered a mistake. The fly-on-the-wall television documentary showed the Queen, Prince Philip and their children at work, at home and at play, and it was criticised by some for letting "daylight in upon the magic". David Attenborough worried that it might be responsible for "killing the monarchy". Others saw it as the justification that the press needed to become more intrusive, trivialising royalty and, turning it into a soap opera.

Perhaps the Queen agreed. It is said that it's by her order that the programme hasn't been broadcast since 1977 – that it's unofficially banned. It's also said that she hadn't been keen on it initially, but had been persuaded by Philip. Certainly, he exercised final veto on what was included, so if it was a misstep, the responsibility lies with him.

The intention was to move with the times – to show the people behind the titles – and Philip's judgment was probably right. The modern world was not as readily awed by magic as once it had been; indeed, it was getting rather fond of daylight illuminating the personal stories, the individual experiences. Appearing on ITV's *Face the Press* in 1968, Philip had already suggested that he understood the need to adjust to new

The days when the press kept quiet about the abdication crisis were gone. Television and the tabloids had changed the rules

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conventions. "The monarchy is part of the fabric of the country," he explained, "and, as the fabric alters, so does the monarchy and the people's reaction to it."

In the decades since *Royal Family*, the lines between private and public have largely been blurred. If we were then still a long way from Philip's granddaughter-in-law being invited to "speak your truth" by Oprah Winfrey on primetime television, that was the direction of travel. Some saw a decline of deference, a refreshing rejection of stuffiness; others perceived an indulgence of disrespect, or a deplorable Americanisation of Britain. Either way, it would have been folly to imagine that the most famous family in the country could remain entirely aloof. The days when the British press kept quiet about the abdication crisis were gone. Television and the tabloids had changed the rules, and the monarchy – like all major international brands – needed to learn the game of media management.

In any event, the public's fascination with the private doings of the royal family went back long before soap operas. In a less-respectful earlier age the people had been entertained by stories of the bitter dispute between the prince regent (later George IV) and his estranged wife, Caroline, and by rumours in 1810 that the Duke of Cumberland had murdered his valet. In the 1970s and 80s, the love lives of the young royals were bound to attract the media.

That younger generation could, though, have learned something from Philip about where to draw the line. "I've never discussed private matters, and I don't think the Queen has either," he commented in 1994, shortly after Charles had talked on TV about the breakdown of his marriage to Diana. Despite

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New gold dream
Dancers reflecting the UK's cultural diversity parade during the Queen's golden jubilee celebrations. "Britain felt rather pleased with its new, inclusive identity," says Alwyn Turner

all the endless guff and gossip, the reality was that the monarchy did remain part of the fabric of the country – it still fulfilled its role of reflecting the image we had of ourselves, even as that image has been refashioned in a post-imperial Britain.

Embracing cultural diversity

The Queen's golden jubilee in 2002 provided a chance to mark the changes in society since the last such celebration 25 years earlier. "If you'd said the word 'samosa' to me during the silver jubilee, I wouldn't have known what you meant," said a 61-year-old woman, wearing a plastic union flag apron at a street party in the appropriately named Jubilee Street in Whitechapel, east London. "But this time round it's important to make this day special for all members of this community. We can hark back to the good old days as much as we like, but things have to move on."

That was the theme of the 2002 celebrations. There were formal events, of course: traditional moments of pomp and circumstance, such as when the Queen and Prince Philip, accompanied by Charles and Anne on horseback, were driven in the Gold State Coach from Buckingham Palace to a service at St Paul's Cathedral. But there was also a pioneering display of cultural diversity.

A pageant along the Mall featured a collection of vehicles intended to evoke the spirit of Britishness: double-decker buses, yellow AA vans, old police cars, ambulances and fire engines, as well as a contingent of Hell's Angels. Accompanying them on foot were Chelsea pensioners, hula-hula dancers, thousands of gospel singers, a Dalek, groups from the Notting Hill Carnival and children from every Commonwealth nation. The Queen and Prince Philip also gamely turned out for a concert in the palace grounds, featuring an eclectic line-up that included S Club 7, Shirley Bassey and Ozzy Osbourne.

This was the new story that Britain wanted to tell about itself – still headed by the same family, itself having changed along with the nation

Back in 1977, Philip had observed that the massive enthusiasm for the silver jubilee had been driven not by love of the royal family so much as the need for some fun amid economic and social crises. This time, it felt more like a genuine celebration. Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897 had featured London's biggest-ever parade, with the colonies and dominions of the empire kneeling in tribute to the woman who ruled a quarter of the world. Now the same nations were dancing, not kneeling, and Britain felt rather pleased with its new, inclusive identity. Former cabinet minister and *Daily Telegraph* editor Bill Deedes wrote: "Of all the royal pageants I have seen in the past 70 years, this one came closer to the life of our nation than any before it."

This was the new story that Britain wanted to tell about itself in the 21st century – about a country that could embrace tradition and modernity, pageantry and pop music, still headed by the same family, itself having changed along with the nation. Despite his subsidiary public role, Philip played a part in that reinvention, just as Prince Albert – the consort on whom he said he modelled himself – had done in the 19th century.

Royal role model
Queen Victoria is pictured with her husband, Prince Albert – the royal consort on whose role Philip declared that he modelled his own

PA IMAGES/ALAMY

Alwyn Turner is a senior lecturer in history at the University of Chichester. His newest book, *All in it Together: England in the Early 21st Century*, will be published by Profile Books in June

LISTEN Catch up on the BBC World Service documentary **HRH Prince Philip: A Celebration of a Life** at *bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct2fn2*

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Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

What was the Tuskegee experiment?

The 1932 Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male was a particularly disturbing case of American medical racism. Set into motion by the venereal disease section of the US Public Health Service, the experiment was hosted in Macon County, Alabama at the historically black Tuskegee Institute (today the Tuskegee University). In total 600 black men were recruited to the study – 399 exhibited symptoms of syphilis, and the other 201 were uninfected and would act as a control group. All went untreated for syphilis for the four decades that the study ran for.

Contrary to popular belief, none of the men were purposefully infected with syphilis as part of the study. However, all 600 men were forced to undergo round after round of painful and extensive tests, such as spinal taps. Viewed merely as poor sharecroppers who lacked schooling, the participants were enticed by the lure of cooked food, free medical assistance (covering examinations, minor treatments and transport to and from hospitals) and burial stipends of up to $50 – although the latter was only granted if they consented to autopsies.

The experiment was hidden from public knowledge until 1972, when a whistleblower blew open the story in America's newspapers. By that point, 128 participants had died of syphilis or related complications, 40 of the infected men's wives had contracted the disease, and around 19 of their children were born with it, which they had inherited from their fathers.

Across the globe, the case cemented the idea that African-Americans were treated as medical guinea pigs. It also reinforced generations of African-American mistrust in the United States' healthcare system.

Sowande' Mustakeem, associate professor of history and of African and African-American Studies at Washington University in St Louis

A participant having his blood taken as part of the Tuskegee experiment. The 40-year study aimed to investigate the effects of syphilis in African-American men, and it caused enduring mistrust of the US healthcare system

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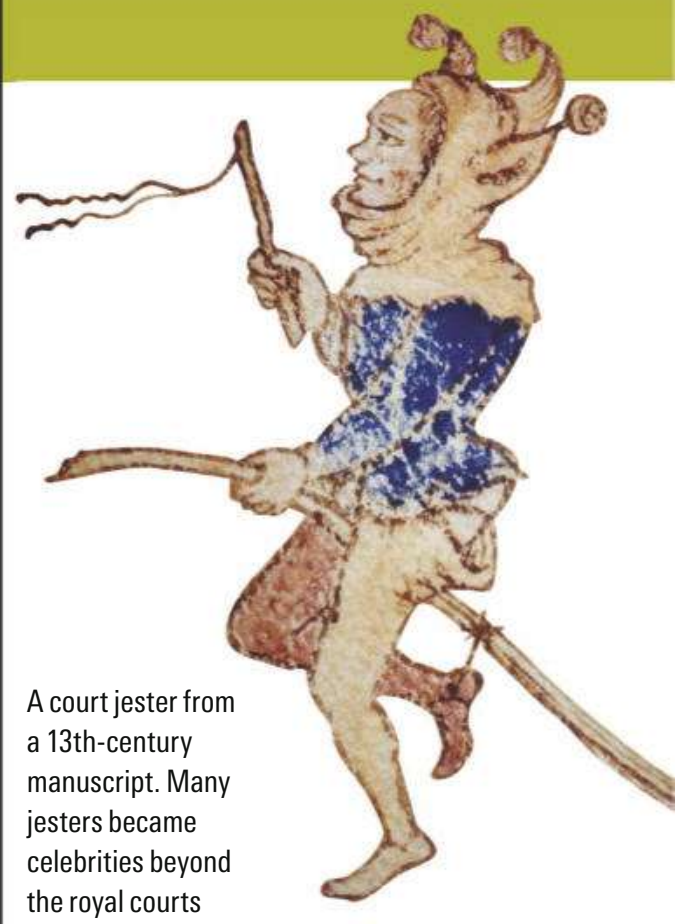

A court jester from a 13th-century manuscript. Many jesters became celebrities beyond the royal courts

What's the earliest recorded reference of a court jester, and how were they viewed in society?

Vivienne Orme

There are records of individuals who through wit, disability or unusual physical traits amused the elites of ancient societies, starting with Egypt 5,000 years ago. One of the earliest for whom we have a substantial biography is Dongfang Shuo, who entertained China's Emperor Wu (reigned 141–87 BC), though he was also a noted scholar.

The origins of the European jester are complex. We know of some in the 11th century, including a rare English female "joculatrix" called Adeline, though the first in recognisable medieval/Renaissance form was arguably Tom le Fol, employed by King Edward I.

Many became celebrities beyond the court. Books of the gags of Archy Armstrong, former sheep-stealer turned King James VI and I's jester, were popular for decades.

Some jesters were also acrobats, singers, jugglers and conjurors. Maybe Roland le Pettour, given an estate by Henry III to perform a "leap, whistle and a fart" each Christmas, had other gifts, too.

Eugene Byrne, author and journalist specialising in history

LEFT: Jutta Rüdiger (in black) and Joseph Goebbels with League of German Girls members, 1940. Rüdiger was one of the Nazi Party's most senior women
BELOW: Director Leni Riefenstahl with a cameraman at the Berlin Olympics, 1936

How high were women able to progress in the Nazi hierarchy?

Charles Solomon

The short answer is not high at all. After all, when we think of leading Nazis, what names come to mind? Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, Hermann Göring, Joseph Goebbels, Albert Speer, Rudolf Hess and Reinhard Heydrich were among the most prominent. And not a single woman's name. That comes as no surprise when we consider the nature of the Nazi Party and its worldview. Nazi ideology made it very difficult for women to progress in the party hierarchy, because women were to be limited to the "small world" of the home and family, while men were to engage in the "big world" of politics and public life.

So who were the most renowned women in the Third Reich? The most prominent female in the party hierarchy was Gertrud Scholtz-Klink. Her position as leader of the National Socialist Women's League, as well as Jutta Rüdiger's, as head of the League of German Girls, was as high-ranking as it was possible for a woman to be in the Nazi Party.

The three most widely known women of the Third Reich today are Magda Goebbels, who was a member of the Nazi Party, Eva Braun and Leni Riefenstahl. Magda, the wife of the Nazi minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, had a public role and was often considered to be the "first lady of the Reich". Eva, Hitler's lover and eventual wife, was largely hidden from public view during the Third Reich. And Riefenstahl was a film director, famous for her films of the Nazi Party Rally at Nuremberg and the 1936 Olympics.

There were also many thousands of women who worked as auxiliaries for the SS and as camp guards – Irma Grese and Ilse Koch are the most well-known of these guards.

Lisa Pine, associate professor of history at London South Bank University

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DID YOU KNOW...?

Petrifying play

In January 1926, the BBC interrupted a broadcast from Edinburgh to report that there were riots on London's streets, the Savoy Hotel had been blown up and a government minister had been hanged from a lamppost in Vauxhall. Many people panicked, thinking red revolution had come to Britain. In fact, as in the case of the 1938 Orson Welles broadcast of *The War of the Worlds*, listeners had tuned in to a play – a 12-minute parody of a news bulletin.

Dung deal

The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus reportedly died after he coated himself with cow dung and was attacked by dogs. There are different stories about his death but, according to the historian Neanthes of Cyzicus, Heraclitus, suffering from dropsy, believed that he could effect a cure by covering himself with manure and lying in the sun. The warmth of sun and dung would draw out the humours causing his illness. Instead, the manure attracted scavenging dogs who killed him.

Puss in booze

Eighteenth-century Londoners sometimes had their gin served by a cat. Fearful of people's over-consumption of the spirit, the government introduced laws controlling its sale in 1736. To get around these, an Irishman, Dudley Bradstreet, came up with an early vending machine called a Puss and Mew. A wooden board, carved with the image of a cat, covered a window. The buyer placed coins through the cat's mouth and the gin-seller dispensed the booze through a pipe connected to the paw. H

Nick Rennison, writer and journalist specialising in history

A Puss and Mew gin-dispensing device in London. These contraptions sidestepped laws controlling the sale of spirits

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Romantic gesture
The *Talbot Shrewsbury Book*, a collection including romances, is presented to Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou, c1445. The literary genre was wildly popular with everyone from monarchs to merchants

It is surprising what you can learn from reading medieval romances. One much-loved tale gives this handy tip: if you are a beautiful woman and you are wondering how to keep unwanted suitors at bay, why not put some rotting chicken meat under your armpits? Once admirers get a whiff, all amorous attention is guaranteed to stop. This is probably the first recorded use of a chastity chicken.

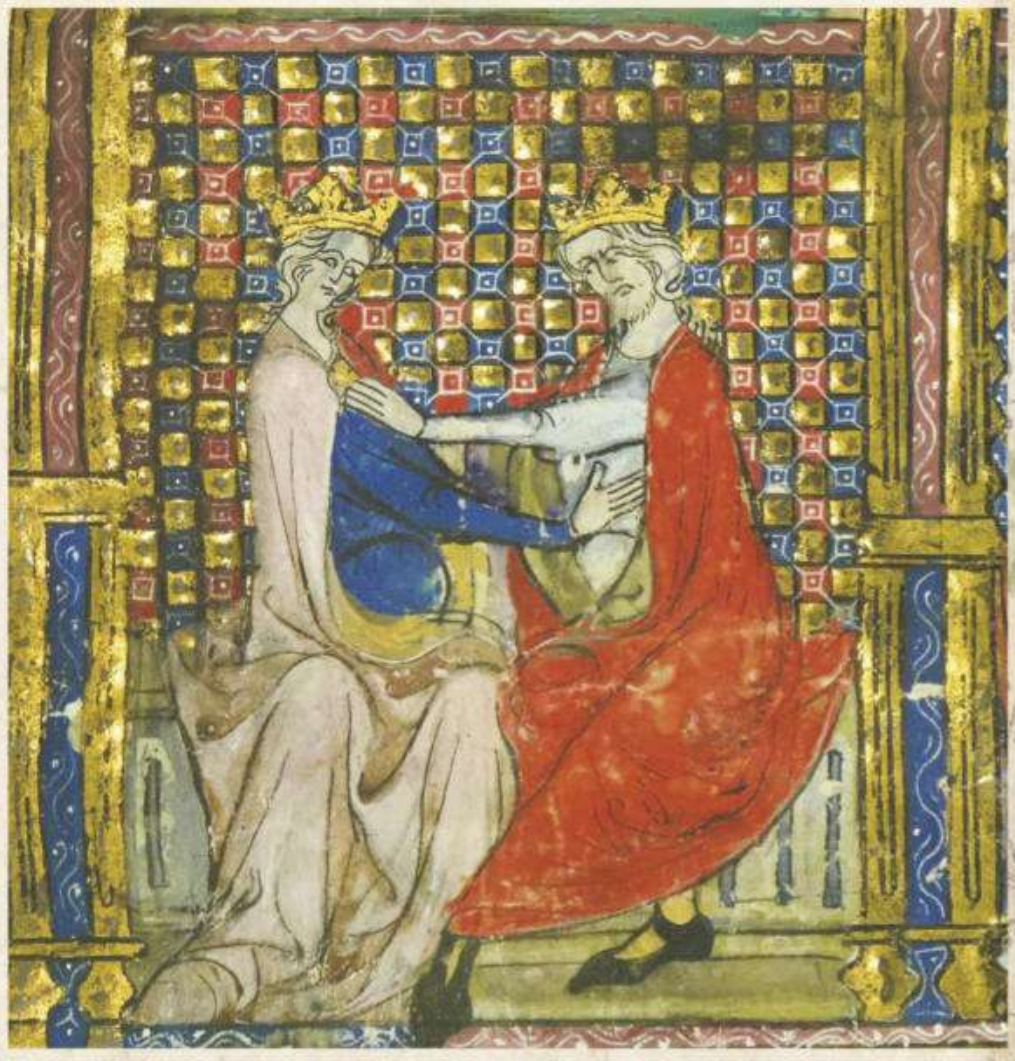
The chicken is one of the main plot points of *Paris and Vienne*, a romance that took medieval Europe by storm from the early 15th century (the best-known version was composed around 1432). It was all the rage at the courts of Burgundy. The famous printer William Caxton translated it into English. Sweden's last Catholic bishop had a copy, and so did the archbishop of Armagh. The romance was written down in Arabic script by converted Muslims in Spain – not long before all use of Arabic was banned – and it was also translated into Italian, Dutch, Yiddish, Greek and Armenian.

Paris and Vienne was a pan-European sensation. Yet it was hardly a one-off: romance was the most popular secular genre of literature of the Middle Ages. These are highly entertaining stories about adventure, love, duels and battles, encounters with the supernatural, knights on daring quests, and women who are often perfectly capable of slaying a dragon themselves. The genre is the ancestor of fairy tales, the novel and modern-day fantasy fiction – and its popularity endured for centuries.

French kissing

The origins of the romance go back to 12th-century France. The earliest romances emerged from a courtly context, with poets writing for an aristocratic audience. Patrons like Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughter Marie de Champagne played a key role in the genre's development. What happened at French courts also had a profound impact on English literature, with its earliest romances written not in English but in Anglo-Norman, the variety of French spoken by the nobility. After all, this was a time when the kings of England (Stephen of Blois, Henry II and Richard the Lionheart) were still more French than English.

Surprisingly, the word "romance" originally had nothing to do with love. *Romanz* was a term used to describe works written "en roman" – in the Romance language, as opposed to Latin. "Romance" simply meant "book written in French".



BRIDGEMAN/BIBLIOTEQUE NATIONAL DE FRANCE/ ALAMY/AKG

Status symbol A scene from the 12th-century *Le Roman d'Enéas*. Eager to exploit the prestige conferred by the Latin source material, many medieval authors based their romances on classical texts

The medieval romance is the ancestor of fairy tales, the novel and modern-day fantasy fiction

No expense spared Alexander the Great harnesses griffins to power his flying machine in the *Talbot Shrewsbury Book*. Like many other collections that included chivalric romances, this manuscript was extraordinarily lavish, featuring dazzling illustrations, expensive colours and gold leaf

The earliest romances were translations of classical texts rooted in history and legend. The *Roman d'Eneas* adapted the Aeneid, and the *Roman de Troie* was a retelling of the Trojan War. They were part of a move designed to elevate French as a literary language, with the Latin source material lending its high status to a still-emerging vernacular literature.

Poets also composed stories about King Arthur and his knights, greatly elaborating what they had read in Latin histories, adding new elements and characters such as Lancelot. Key works include Wace's *Roman de Brut* and Chrétien de Troyes' Arthurian romances, which in turn sparked countless retellings and translations, starting a long history of re-imaginings that continues to this day.

From the French courts romances moved to the courts of Germany and the Low Countries. They soon conquered the rest of Europe, too. The genre gradually emerged as a distinct category of literature which became, over time, highly formulaic (see box on page 75). Its main heroes were no longer only classical figures or Arthurian knights. And in romances like *Emaré*, *Mélusine* and *Silence*, noble ladies played a starring role.

One of the key developments that sets romances apart from earlier epics such as

Enduring legend Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II receive the Lancelot-Grail Cycle. Arthurian tales proved a rich source of inspiration for romances across the Middle Ages

Subversive material? Lovers in the *Roman de la Rose*, written in the 13th century. In later centuries, it was said romances "inflamed beastly and filthy desire"

Beowulf is that characters are motivated not only by fame or loyalty to a lord but also by love. Martial prowess is not enough: the perfect knight must also know how to treat a lady.

Not much is known about the authors of medieval romances. Many remain anonymous, and when we do have a name, we know little else. For instance, *Paris and Vienne* – the chastity chicken story – is attributed to Pierre de la Cépède, but apart from the possibility that he came from Marseilles we know nothing about this person. It may not even be the author's real name.

Geoffrey Chaucer is an interesting exception, as he is one of few medieval authors about whom we know a great deal. His *Canterbury Tales* include several romances and he translated the highly influential *Roman de la Rose*. However, it is more common for the lives of named romance authors to be shrouded in mystery, where all we know is that they were well-educated and often worked for the nobility.

Monstrous children

For centuries, the nobility were the main audience of romances. With their courtly settings and adventures of knights, dukes, kings and damsels, romances reflected a world they knew. Some even had a personal connection. The Lusignan kings of Cyprus and a branch of the House of Luxembourg claimed descent from a romance character. This was Mélusine, who spends her Saturdays splashing around the bath with "a serpent's tail as large as a barrel of herring" and who gives birth to part-monstrous children. Supposed descendants who owned copies of this romance include Jean de Berry – son of John II of France and a famous book collector – and Jacquetta of Luxembourg, mother to Edward IV's queen, Elizabeth Woodville. The House of Cleves saw the hero of the *Swan Knight* as their legendary founder. This is the story of children born with chains around their necks, who transform into swans when the chains are removed.

Mélusine spends her Saturdays splashing around the bath with a "serpent's tail as large as a barrel of herring"

That romances were part of an elite literary culture is also reflected in their manuscripts. Many French romances, in particular, are found in lavish, beautifully illuminated books. One example is the *Talbot Shrewsbury Book* (see image on page 71), which contains five romances and several other chivalric texts, including the Statutes of the Order of the Garter. The book features a high number of illustrations, with expensive colours and gold leaf, and was given by the English knight John Talbot to the French princess Margaret of Anjou as she came over to England to marry Henry VI. Manuscripts like this doubled up as status symbols.

The late medieval period saw some important changes. Faster methods of manuscript production and the rise of printing meant that books could be produced on a much larger scale. Across Europe, romances were among the earliest tales set to print – printers were clearly confident they would sell well. *Mélusine* survives in no fewer than 54 manuscripts – including two in English – but it was printed at least 73 times before 1600, with each print run consisting of

The name of the rose
A miniature from a manuscript of the *Roman de la Rose*, c1365. The French poem was translated into English by Geoffrey Chaucer, one of the few authors of medieval romances whose life is not shrouded in anonymity

Under the covers
Lancelot and Guinevere depicted in a manuscript from the 14th century. Until then, romances had been predominately the preserve of the upper classes

GETTY IMAGES/AKG/ BRIDGEMAN

HOW TO WRITE A MEDIEVAL ROMANCE

Planning on penning your own chivalric love story? Here are five tips for turning it into a bestseller

Sword play

ABOVE: **A knight prays to a snail in a 14th-century manuscript. The first principle of romance-writing is to base your tale around a quest, such as a hunt for a magical object or animal**

LEFT: **Perceval meets the Fisher King in an illustration for Chrétien de Troyes' 12th-century *Perceval, The Story of the Grail***

1 Start with a quest

This can be a rescue operation, a hunt for a magical object or animal, a giant who threatens the land or a Green Knight who lets you lop off his head. Particular favourites are transformation curses that need to be broken (eg werewolves) and the identity quest, where a knight must find out who his parents are (always nobility, never peasants).

Romances have a drive towards a goal that is ultimately achieved, despite many obstacles. Some turn familiar tropes on their head. In *Lybeaus Desconus* the knight thinks he must save a lady by killing a dragon, but instead "the dragon kisses him on the mouth" and transforms into a beautiful woman.

2 Go full circle

Romances are circular, moving from order to chaos back to order. This is often reflected in the trajectory of plots. A common example is for the tale to start at court before something causes the knight to travel abroad or, even better, to a forest, enchanted castle or fairy realm. When all is resolved, the knight returns to court.

3 Let love rule

The 12th century saw increased concerns over the inheritance of lands, titles and properties. Aristocratic marriages had long been made for political or economic gain, but the church now insisted that marriage must be between consenting partners who loved each other. As a result, romances turn the transactional marriages of real life into perfect love stories. Characters fall in love at first sight and love becomes wish-fulfilment, where the lover brings lands, status, wealth and solves all problems. Common tropes of love in film and fiction today – including that there is one person who can complete you – can be traced back to this.

4 Remember the "good" old days

Nostalgia is not just a modern vice. Many romances show a longing for the good old days – the time of Charlemagne, of Arthur or ancient Rome. There is a dark side to this, however. Several romances written after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 reflect western imperialist fantasies about reconquering the city for Christendom. Saracens are the go-to enemy for medieval romances, much like Russians in American cinema. Stories of triumphs over pagans may have influenced Spanish conquistadors who travelled to the New World – and not for the better.

5 End on a happy note

A happy ending is a must. Romances typically conclude with marriage and a pregnancy. As in fairy tales, we never hear about the forever after – do they fight over who does the dishes? That's left to our imaginations.

Sometimes, however, this formula leads to problems, for example when one knight stars in so many romances that he accumulates multiple wives. The author of *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* hurdles this obstacle by simply killing off the lady at the end, so our hero is free to marry again in the next romance!

several hundred copies. Such romances became early European bestsellers. It was probably possible to walk into a bookshop in any major European city and find a local translated version.

Increases in literacy and better access to education also meant that more people were reading books. Romances were no longer associated with an exclusively aristocratic milieu. In England, more and more members of the gentry, well-to-do merchants and the emerging middle classes read romances. The books they owned were not lavish and many were shared by the entire household.

At the same time, the production of romances moved from the court to urban centres. This shift affected the content of romances, too: one of the heroes of *Sir Amadace* is a merchant, who teaches a spendthrift knight that aristocratic wealth is often a shallow performance.

A female perspective In a 15th-century illustration of the story of *Ponthus et Sidoine*, a group disguised as wildmen dance at the wedding of the eponymous Sidonia. Women were voracious consumers, patrons and translators of romances; Eleanor of Scotland (1433–80) translated this story from French to German

Tales of a magical horse

One phenomenon that distinguished romances from other literary genres was their popularity among women – as both consumers and patrons. Romances came to Sweden because of the patronage of Queen Eufemia. Margaret of York patronised the first book printed in English, also a romance: *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, printed around 1473. And Eleanor of Scotland translated the French *Ponthus et Sidoine* into German.

But women especially enjoyed *reading* romances. Alice Chaucer – granddaughter of the famous poet – owned a romance about four brothers who travel around on a magical horse. Owners of Arthurian romances included Isabella of France, and major players in the Wars of the Roses such as Margaret Beaufort, Elizabeth Woodville and Anne Neville. Even the Spanish nun, Saint Teresa, admitted that she loved romances. Rebecca Lemp – a woman burned at the stake for witchcraft – referred to herself as the romance heroine Maguelonne in the last letter she wrote to her husband.

Dying for her faith The most visible female role models in the Middle Ages were martyred saints such as Margaret of Antioch (below) and the stars of romances

One reason why the romance appealed to women is that it was one of the few medieval genres in which they feature as key characters. Women also starred in saints' lives, but romances offered something different from spiritual hardship and martyrdom.

Although in early romances women are often a commodity to be won, late medieval romances feature characters who are smart and well-read, the kind of women upon whom knights depend for advice. In *Amoryus and Cleopes*, it is the lady who knows how to defeat a dragon. Cleopes has an encyclopaedic knowledge of dragons and their weaknesses, telling Amoryus that the one he faces can be defeated by using gemstones for protection (a ruby and emerald "always pointed at his eyes") and herbs to counteract its venom, including "orygannum, fenel, and dragannys" (oregano, fennel and tarragon).

Critics issued dire warnings of romances' depravity and their corrupting influence on women

Such strong female characters may have appealed to the substantial female readership. But not everyone was at ease with the idea of women voraciously reading romances. By the end of the medieval period, the genre had

WIKIPEDIA/GETTY

A new wave
Mélusine, the water spirit and popular romance figure, shown in a 16th-century woodcut (left) and (below) emblazoned on the side of a Starbucks coffee cup five centuries later

started to spark a backlash, and women were at the centre of it. Critics counselled against filling women's heads with strange ideas, and issued dire warnings over romance's depravity and corrupting influence. A genre once seen as the emblem of sophistication and noble literary culture was now branded as pulp fiction.

Wit-besotting trash

Sixteenth-century humanists were at the vanguard of this outbreak of anti-romance sanctimony. Michel de Montaigne called romances "wit-besotting trash", while the English scholar Roger Ascham warned that readers would be led to "manslaughter and bawdry". One commentator added that romances dealt with "no other material than sex and war". Juan Luis Vives, another prominent humanist, intoned that romances inflamed "beastly and filthy desire" and were especially damaging to women, who should "avoid these books as she would a viper or a scorpion".

It is no coincidence that this outbreak of moral outrage came at a time when women were being recognised as romances' main readers. This period also saw heated debates over whether women should have access to education. Many of these critiques were thinly veiled demands that women know their place. After all, a wife who reads about worlds beyond her own might not be content to stay at home. This snobbery against popular smut is also the start of a centuries-long tradition of men snubbing women's literary tastes and policing their reading habits.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, such warnings did little to dampen romances' popularity. If anything, they acted like parental advisory labels on CDs in the 1990s, or 18+ ratings on games, merely ensuring that every teenager rushed out and procured a copy.

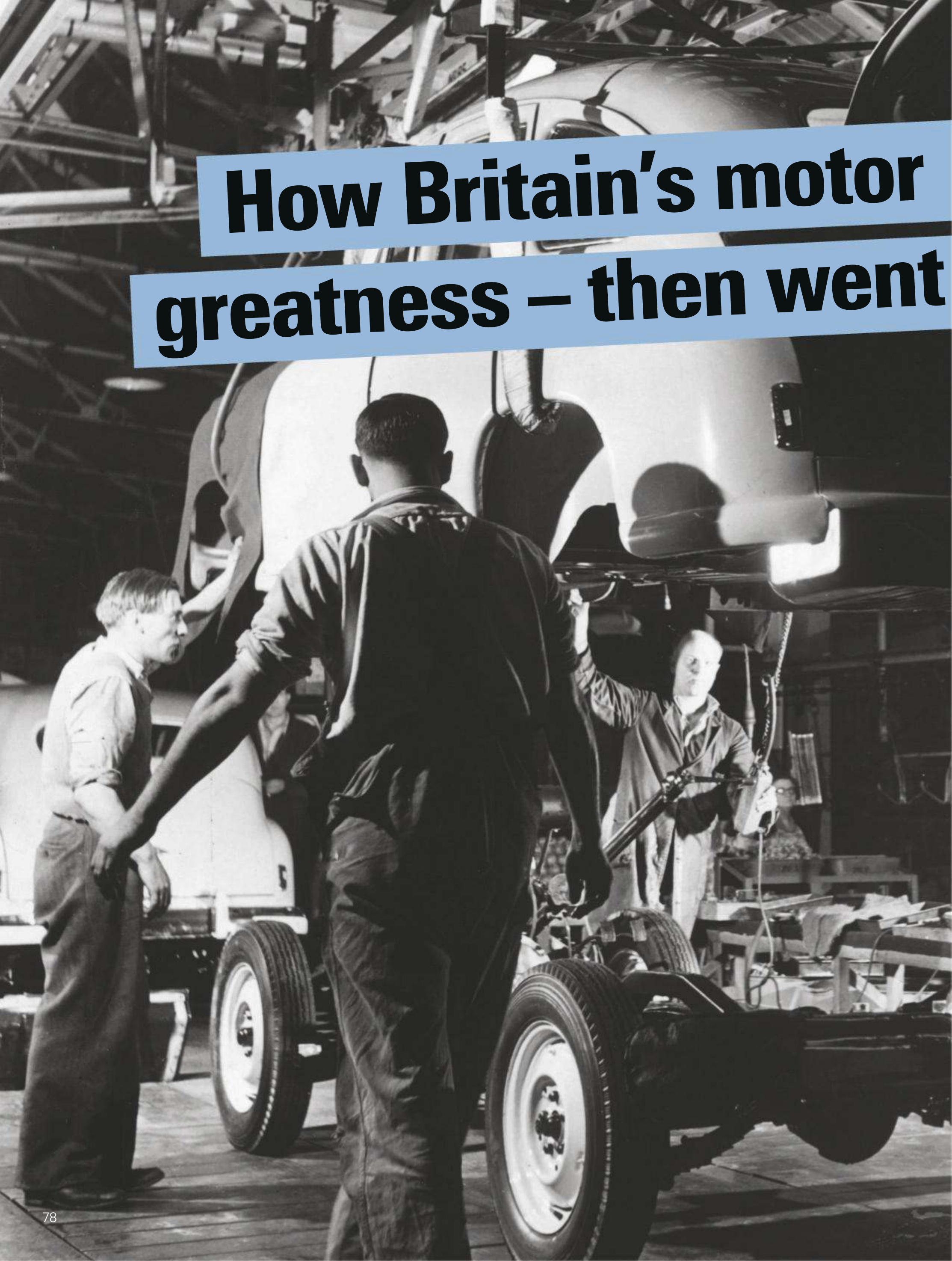
Some romances appeared on lists of books prohibited by the church, but that rarely meant they went out of circulation. Even *Robert the Devil* – whose moral lesson is that, if you sleep with the devil, your child will get the unfortunate habit of setting nuns on fire – remained in print; the only prohibition was that it should not be taught to children. In fact, romances remained in fashion well in to the early modern period. Many were turned into plays, pageants, ballads or other forms of popular entertainment that ensured their stories lived on.

Though the romances themselves are now often forgotten, their plots and characters shaped popular culture for centuries after. Shakespeare was a fan: he borrowed Oberon (the fairy king in *A Midsummer's Night Dream*) from *Huon of Bordeaux*, while *Pericles* is based on *Apollonius*. Dickens read *Valentine and Orson* (about twins separated at birth, one raised by a bear) and *Fortunatus*, with his ever-replenishing purse and teleporting hat. Authors such as Walter Scott and Goethe later re-popularised romances with works such as *Ivanhoe* and *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years*, respectively.

And some of the most popular characters from medieval romances are still with us today: take a stroll along your local high street and there's every chance you'll catch sight of Mélusine staring back at you from the most unlikely of places: a Starbucks coffee cup. Who said romance was dead? H

Lydia Zeldenrust is Leverhulme early career fellow at the University of York. She will be giving an online talk, *Medieval Romances, Trash Fiction and Rebel Women*, at the York Festival of Ideas on 18 June (*yorkfestivalofideas.com)*

How Britain's motor greatness – then went



city roared to into reverse

GETTY IMAGES

Steve Humphries follows the changing fortunes of Coventry's car industry, from its heyday as Britain's leading automobile maker to a post-industrial ghost town

Accompanies Steve Humphries' new BBC Four documentary, **Classic Cars: Made in Coventry**

BBC FOUR

Tip-top condition
Workers lower the bodywork of a Standard Vanguard car onto its chassis in Coventry, 1950. The Midlands city was home to some of the most iconic names in British car manufacturing, including Jaguar, Rover and Triumph

Coventry's motoring miracle

Coventry was Britain's "motor city". The home of many world-famous brands such as Jaguar, Triumph and Rover, it boasted the nation's best engineers, designers and brands. However, the city's car industry went into a dramatic decline in the seventies and eighties, leading to mass unemployment. How did this hub of engineering excellence slide into obscurity in the space of a few decades?

Spring 2021 marks the beginning of Coventry's year as the UK's City of Culture and, to celebrate, car-loving presenter Mark Evans and I have pieced together the extraordinary story of the cars made in the city in a new documentary, *Classic Cars: Made in Coventry*.

The story of the city's love affair with cars began back in 1897, when the first British-built production cars began to appear on the roads – and they were made in Coventry. In the process of filming the documentary, we unearthed rare archive of early car making in the city. But most exciting of all was filming Michael Flather, who owns the oldest regularly driven Daimler in Britain – it reaches a top speed of around 20mph. He said: "It brings a smile to people's faces and everyone waves at you."

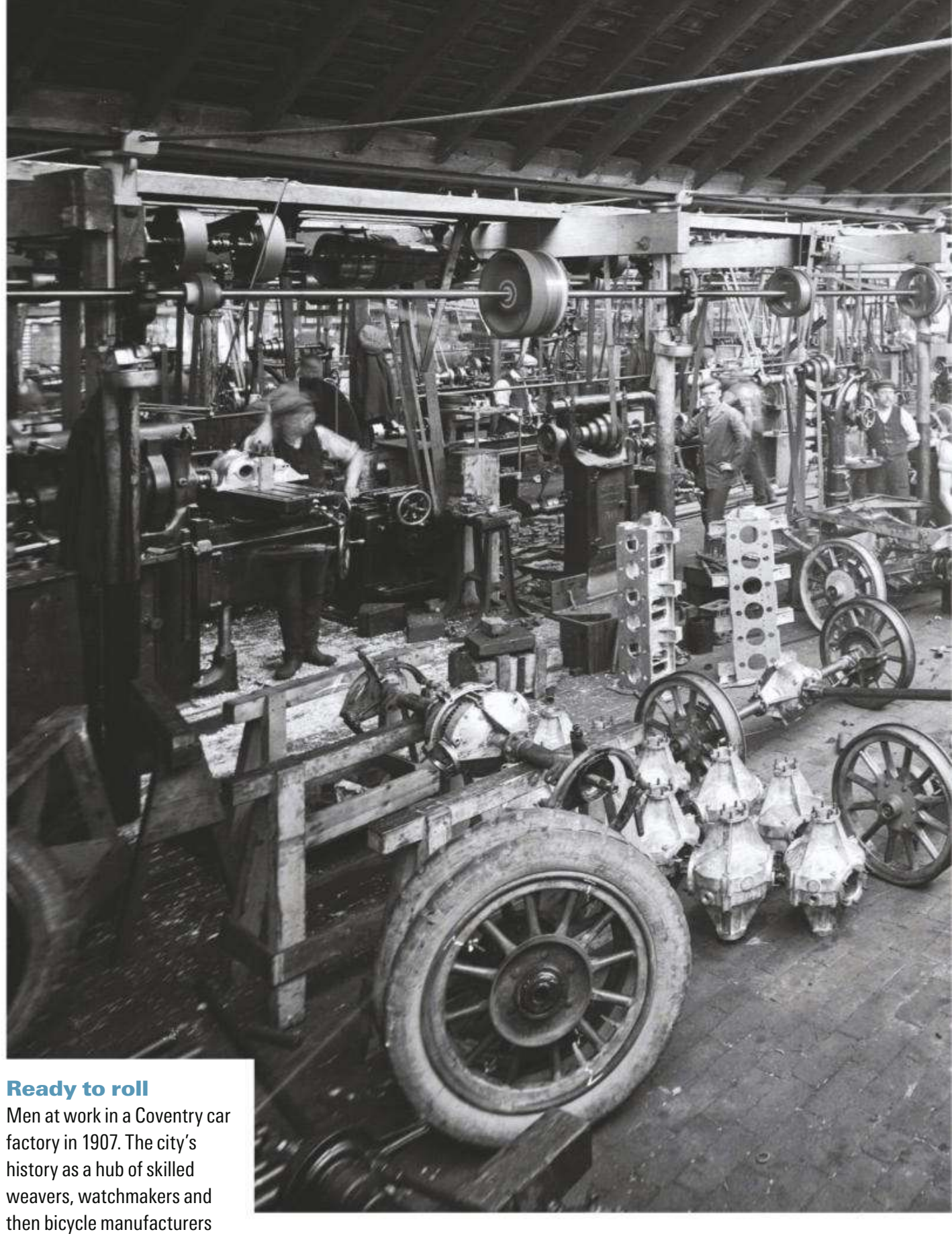
But why did the car industry first develop there? For centuries Coventry had been a city of skilled weavers and watchmakers, but when those industries collapsed with the industrial revolution, their craftsmen found work in the new transport revolution that began with bicycles. In the 1890s there were 75 different cycle companies in the city. Some such as Humber, Rover and Singer would go on to make cars.

But only one car manufacturer actually began as a family of Coventry weavers: Riley, a company that was once famous for its beautifully crafted sports cars. Today its story is told by Victor Riley who, now in his mid-80s, is the oldest surviving member of Coventry's greatest car manufacturing dynasty. He's spent many years collecting old artefacts, photographs and documents to create the Riley Archives. Victor remembers how in the early days it was truly a family business: "Alan made the bodies, Percy made the engines, Stanley designed the chassis and Ted did a multiplicity of tasks, helping out wherever father put him."

A charismatic enigma

The Coventry car industry truly took off in the 1920s – and the man behind this transformation was a young shell-shocked veteran of the First World War, Captain John Black. His remarkable story is told by his son, Nick, who spent some of his retirement years delving into his dad's past. "My dad was always an enigma, I just wanted to find out who he was," Nick says. He discovered how his father, who knew little or nothing about cars, managed to get a job at the Coventry-based Hillman Motor Car Company and married the boss's daughter, Daisy Hillman.

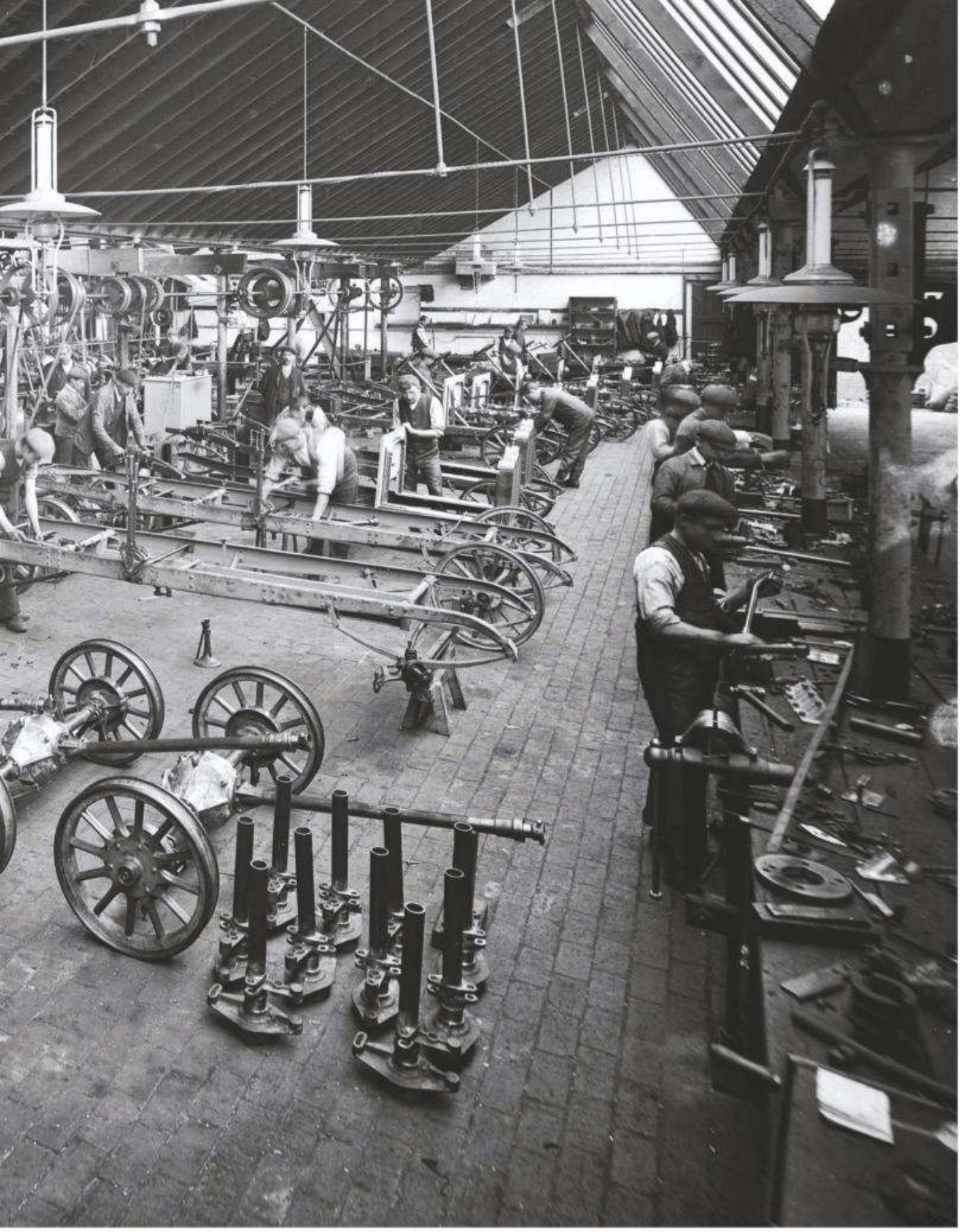
Captain Black was hard-working and charismatic, and he soon became one of the leading figures in the British car industry, joining the Standard Motor Company in 1929. Here he introduced the mind-numbing assembly-line method of car making, pioneered by Henry Ford in America. Yet despite the harsh working conditions he imposed, Black was surprisingly popular with the workers. Nick says: "He used to take a very personal interest in everyone and actually remembered their names. He'd see one of the workers and say: 'How's your mum at the moment, how's her arthritis doing?'" Between 1931 and 1939, output at Coventry's



Ready to roll
Men at work in a Coventry car factory in 1907. The city's history as a hub of skilled weavers, watchmakers and then bicycle manufacturers made it a natural home for Britain's nascent car industry

Rally driver Kitty Brunell road-tests a Riley 9 tourer, c1930. The Rileys went into business as Coventry weavers, later branching out into sports cars

GETTY IMAGES



TESTIMONY FILMS

Standard factories increased from 8,000 to 55,000 vehicles a year.

In the depression years of the late 1920s and early 1930s, most people wanted a car that was cheap to buy and cheap to run. Among the most popular was a car made by William and Reginald Rootes – ambitious car dealers from Kent who moved into manufacturing when they bought Coventry car makers Hillman and Humber. The Hillman Minx, first launched in 1932, was soon clocking up sales of 20,000 a year. By the end of the 1930s, Standard and the Rootes group were both huge players in the British car market.

At Standard, the company's success helped fund a flamboyant lifestyle for Captain John Black of wild parties, skiing trips and the purchase of Mallory Court, a sprawling country estate near Leamington Spa, where he lived with his family. But he was a

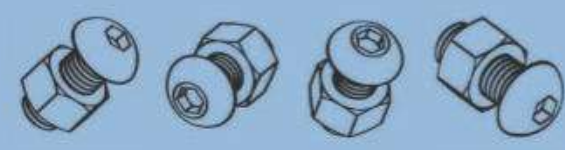
The man behind the rise of Coventry's car industry was a shell-shocked veteran of the First World War

John Black, the flamboyant, fast-living and troubled war veteran who made Standard one of the powerhouses of the British motor industry

COVENTRY'S CAR INDUSTRY IN NUMBERS

100mph

In the early 1950s, Triumph launched their answer to the market-leading Jaguar XK120 sports car, the TR2. Capable of reaching a **top speed of more than 100mph**, it cost less than £1,000 and was much loved in Britain and America.



By 1913, on the eve of the First World War, there were 20 manufacturers in Coventry, employing more than 12,000 workers and turning out **9,000 vehicles a year**. There were dozens of component manufacturers too – making everything from engines and car bodies to the nuts and bolts that held them together.

98

Jaguar test-driver Norman Dewis died in 2019, **aged 98**, a legend of the Coventry car industry. In the 1955 Le Mans race, Norman narrowly escaped the tragic accident that **killed 83 spectators**.

The Rootes Group archive sited near Banbury is dedicated to preserving the memory of cars they made in Coventry such as the Hillman Minx (above), the Sunbeam Rapier and the Hunter Hawk. Among many other treasures, it holds more than **300,000 engineering drawings**.

troubled man. His son Nick remembers: "My dad was unhappily married to Daisy. He used to lock himself in the library at Mallory with a loaded pistol and have shooting practice against the wood panelling."

According to Nick, his father turned to alcohol: "[That was] how he dealt with it all – he drank. He used to drink for six months and then he'd stop drinking for six months. But then he went to a dance in Nuneaton, and he bumped into this wonderful young woman called Joan who was aged 21, 17 years his junior, and they instantly fell in love. My mother said she'd never met anyone like him in her life before. But it was six years before he finally got divorced."

Life fundamentally changed in September 1939, when the Second World War broke out. The people of Coventry – especially those who worked in its car industry – now faced a huge challenge. As a manufacturing centre with engineering skills second to none, the city became a major centre for the production of military aircraft, munitions and armoured vehicles, with car companies helping the war effort in every conceivable way.

However, by doing this, Coventry became a major target for the Luftwaffe. Tragedy struck on the night of 14 November 1940, when the city suffered the single most concentrated attack on a British city in the Second World War. The Luftwaffe dropped 500 tonnes of high explosives, 36,000 incendiaries and 50 landmines. Coventry's great medieval cathedral was almost destroyed, and thousands of homes were damaged beyond repair. The official death toll was 554, but the real figure may well have been higher. When daylight finally came, former car factories like those of Triumph and Rover had

The ruins of Coventry's cathedral in the wake of the raid of 14 November 1940. As a manufacturing hub, the city was a prime target for Luftwaffe bombers

Making war
Armstrong Whitworth Whitley bombers on a Coventry assembly line. The city's factories were a crucial part of Britain's war effort

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY/MIKE ASHWORTH

From Coventry's car industry came the planes, engines and munitions that helped Britain win the war

TIMELINE **The boom and bust of "motor city"**

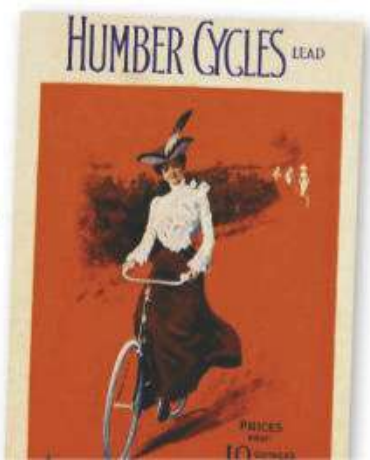
1897
The first cars made in Britain are built by **Daimler in Coventry**. Soon after, Humber and Rover are among the many Coventry cycle companies that switch to making cars.

1931
The **Standard Motor Company introduces the mass assembly line** to Coventry. Output shoots up from 8,000 to 55,000 cars a year (in 1939).

1935
Having moved his car company from Blackpool to Coventry, William Lyons launches the **SS Jaguar** (pictured below), a game-changer brimming with design flair.

14 November 1940
The **Luftwaffe blitzes Coventry**, killing hundreds of people, destroying the Triumph and Rover factories, and badly damaging others.

1950s
Car production in the city doubles, led by the **launch of the Standard Eight** in 1953. Priced at under £500, it is Britain's cheapest car, affordable to many working-class families.



A c1910 postcard for Humber Cycles, which made the switch to car manufacturing

A British Motor Corporation rosette from c1965

been flattened and many others badly damaged. Coventry was in ruins.

Despite the devastation, the city and its people refused to give in, and from Coventry's car industry came the planes, engines, motor vehicles and munitions that helped Britain win the war. Captain John Black's Standard factories specialised in the production of hugely successful Mosquito planes, for which he was knighted in 1943. Coventry's sacrifice would never be forgotten, and out of the ruins of the old cathedral would come Basil Spence's new modernist Coventry Cathedral, whose foundation stone was laid by the Queen in 1956.

The rise of a rival

The postwar years saw a new battle emerge, though this fight was much closer to home. A fierce rivalry burned between two giants of the Coventry car industry: Standard, run by Sir John Black, and Jaguar, run by William Lyons. Lyons was an astute businessman with a natural talent for design who coachbuilt car bodies with engines bought from Standard.

To begin with the two men were friends. But in 1942 Black made the mistake of selling Lyons the machinery to build a new and powerful engine called the XK, which ended up in a brand-new sports car: the XK120. Capable of speeds up to 120mph, it was the world's fastest production car. And it would transform the fortunes of Jaguar. William Lyons' grandson, Michael Quinn, recalls: "My grandfather very quickly went and collected them and had them installed at his own factory. But apparently John Black did actually change his mind. He realised he might have made a mistake."

Nick Black concurred: "My dad actually realised he'd made the biggest mistake of his life, because Jaguar were about to become one

1952
Riley's owner, Morris, joins forces with Austin to create the **British Motor Corporation**. But the distinctive Riley brand is tarnished as a result of the merger.

1959
Standard Triumph launches its new car – **the Triumph Herald** – to rival the Mini. Both easy to drive and appealing to a new female market, it is a great success.

A Triumph Herald police car from 1959

1961
Jaguar produces the E-type, capable of speeds of up to 150mph and costing around £2,000. It becomes an icon of the swinging sixties.

1968
British Leyland is formed to shore up a motor industry declining in the face of foreign competition. It is disastrous for Coventry, leading to bankruptcy and high unemployment.

A car transporter departs the British Leyland Jaguar plant in Coventry, 1972

2021
In its **City of Culture** year, Coventry is reinventing itself again. At the forefront of the city's revival is Jaguar Land Rover, with its pioneering all-electric cars.

Coventry's motoring miracle

Front-runner John Black with a Standard Vanguard, 1947. His domination of the Coventry car market would soon come under threat from the rise of Jaguar

Trend-setter Sir William Lyons, head of Jaguar, with an E-type, 1961. Sleek, stylish and capable of 150mph, this was *the* car of the swinging sixties

of the biggest companies in Coventry of the time. So he went back to Lyons and started begging: 'I'm sorry, I've made a mistake. Can I buy them back off you?' And he [Lyons] said: 'No way mate, your word is your bond.' So you know from that point on they became abject rivals."

Lyons' daughter, Pat Quinn, remembers what a resounding success the Jaguar XK sports cars were in the United States. She said: "I remember my father going to America just after the war and meeting Clark Gable and all the film stars that had fallen in love with the XK. It was certainly a very exciting time."

Dizzying corners

From the earliest days of the car industry, winning motor races had been important for sales. Racing was often a family affair, and one of Riley's most successful racing drivers was Victor Riley's mum, Dorothy, at the wheel of a Riley Ulster Imp. Today, we can still see rare footage of her competing in the 1934 Le Mans 24-hour race where she became the first British woman to complete the race, finishing 13th.

Pat Quinn shared Dorothy Riley's passion for racing, beginning her career in 1950 in the XK120 with her then husband, rally driver Ian Appleyard. Archive footage still exists of them competing in extreme conditions in some of Europe's most gruelling rallies, such as the 3,000km Alpine.

"The mountains were pretty horrendous, you felt quite dizzy going around the corners. It was a little bit scary when one was near the edge, and they just used to go on and on and on, bend after bend. It was great fun because there was of course a great camaraderie among all of us. We always thought we were doing quite a lot of useful work for the factory in discovering faults in the car," she recalled. Pat and Ian were awarded the Gold Cup for their brilliant performances in the Alpine.

Determined to outdo his new rival, Sir John Black bought sports-car maker Triumph and launched his answer to the Jaguar XK120 at the Earl's Court Motor Show in 1952. It was officially known as the Triumph TR2. Capable of a top speed of more than 100mph and costing less than £1,000, the TR2 was loved in Britain and America too. John's son, Nick, remembers: "The whole motive behind buying the Triumph Motor Company for £75,000 in 1945 was to get a name so that he could rival William Lyons of Jaguar. So I think he did probably feel at the end that he had achieved his desire for a sports car."

Racing into history
Dorothy Riley in an Ulster Imp at Le Mans in 1934, the year she became the first British woman to complete the famous 24-hour race

During the 1950s, production in Coventry doubled, as Britons bought more cars than ever before. Standard produced the popular Standard Eight which sold for less than £500, while the Rootes Brothers came up with a revamped American-style Hillman Minx, which proved a huge hit. But it was a different story for Riley, who were swallowed up by the British Motor Corporation, a takeover that ruined their reputation for quality sports-saloon cars.

Jaguar were by now moving centre stage as *the* producer of luxury sports cars. And their reputation was enhanced by their performance on the race track. We filmed the legendary Jaguar test driver Norman Dewis who described his love of speed and how he narrowly escaped being caught up in the 1955 Le Mans race crash, which killed 83 spectators. The footage of this tragedy remains as shocking today as it was then.

But Jaguar didn't dominate every corner of the car industry. In 1959 Standard Triumph unveiled its new small car: the Triumph Herald. The car was a triumph in more than name – notching up well over half a million sales.

Running out of road

The final heyday of Coventry's car industry came in the early 1960s, with the launch of the legendary E-type Jaguar, an icon of the swinging sixties. Costing just £2,000 – half

BRITISH MOTOR INDUSTRY HERITAGE TRUST/TESTIMONY FILMS-RILEY ARCHIVES

One-way traffic Jaguar cars on the production line, Coventry, 1961. By now, the company was a world-leader in luxury sports cars, registering huge sales in the United States

the price of an Aston Martin – it was capable of speeds approaching 150mph. The other bright spot for Coventry was the success of "dolly bird" rally driver Rosemary Smith, racing in the rear engine Hillman Imp produced by the Rootes Brothers in the sexist atmosphere of the sixties.

But towards the end of the decade, Britain – and particularly Coventry – was starting to fall behind in a fiercely competitive international car market. In 1968, in an attempt to shore up the British car industry, British Leyland was formed – a giant conglomerate that included Triumph, Morris, Austin and Rover, employing almost 200,000 people. Sadly the unwieldy size of the company proved a disaster, and they ended up making some of the worst cars in Britain.

Job losses and strikes led to mass unemployment, which became synonymous with the British car industry. Further deindustrialisation in the 1970s and 80s saw unemployment in Coventry rise to a staggering 20 per cent. The tragedy of the city was captured in "Ghost Town", the 1981 hit record produced by local band The Specials. Its lyrics speak of a better time: "Do you remember the good old days before the ghost town? We danced and sang, and the music played in a de boomtown."

Soon, among Coventry's population, the idea of a job for life with the same car company – once so common – was a distant memory. Nick Black remembers how the Standard Triumph Social Club was one of the last survivors of Coventry's golden age in an era

TESTIMONY FILMS-ROSEMARY SMITH/GETTY IMAGES

Rally driver Rosemary Smith's success in a Hillman Imp was one of the final good news stories for the Coventry car industry before it went into decline

of deindustrialisation: "The old community spirit of the shop floor lived on there with the car workers and their families more than anywhere else in Coventry. The tragedy was that by the end of the 20th century there were few permanent jobs, or – more likely – no jobs at all."

But today, in a new global market where a number of British car makers are foreign-owned, there is new hope as Coventry pioneers the latest automotive technology. Jaguar Land Rover remains a significant presence, and the 2018 I-Pace was the company's first all-electric production car. Hopefully there will be new glory days ahead for the Coventry car industry, inspired by a proud legacy of creativity and innovation. H

British Leyland's unwieldy size proved a disaster and it produced some of the worst cars in Britain

Steve Humphries is a TV director and producer. His newest documentary, *Classic Cars: Made in Coventry*, presented by Mark Evans, will be airing on BBC Four in mid-May

Dark times Rover workers protest against proposals to introduce night-shift working, Coventry, 1977. Soon job losses would become synonymous with the car industry

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"Katharine Parr is often just seen as Henry VIII's nurse, but that's a Victorian misconception"

Alison Weir discusses her new novel on the Tudor king's sixth wife › page 97

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"In Napoleon, Pope Pius faced the most ruthless of adversaries"

Alan Forrest on Ambrogio A Caiani's *To Kidnap a Pope* › page 96

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"These mothers gave their sons strategies for survival and taught them that their lives mattered"

Hettie V Williams reviews *Three Mothers* by Anna Malaika Tubbs › page 97

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"War reporters have brought the realities of war into our homes, bearing witness to suffering"

Lucy Noakes on Judith Mackrell's *Going with the Boys* › page 95

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Michael Scott discusses Edmund Richardson's *Alexandria* › page 95

ALAMY/AKG-IMAGES

INTERVIEW / MAX HASTINGS

"Churchill was determined to show that the British could fight"

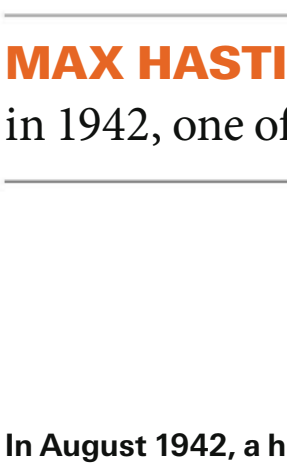
MAX HASTINGS speaks to Rob Attar about his new history of the operation to relieve Malta in 1942, one of the most daring and dangerous British naval actions of the Second World War

In August 1942, a huge British fleet entered the Mediterranean. It was heading to the island of Malta, which had been enduring relentless air attacks from German and Italian forces and was running desperately short of food, fuel and ammunition. Fourteen merchant vessels were guarded by an armada of warships. But Operation Pedestal, as the action was known, still represented an enormous risk as the fleet would have to navigate waters infested with German and Italian ships and submarines, while enemy bombers circled overhead.

Several days of fierce combat in the Mediterranean saw numerous British ships sunk and disabled, with hundreds of lives lost. Yet enough supplies made it through to Malta to enable the island fortress to hold out and remain in British hands for the remainder of the conflict.

Rob Attar: You've previously written about some of the most well-known campaigns of the Second World War, but here you're covering a relatively obscure naval operation. What drew you to Pedestal as a story you wanted to tell?

Max Hastings: Whenever I start on a book, I think about what I might be able to tell readers that they don't know already. And although I've written about the armies and air forces in the Second World War, I've never written a full-length book about the Royal Navy. Now, I believe that the Royal Navy was Britain's most effective fighting service of the war, and what I wanted to do was to explore one episode that reflected not only the navy's great virtues but also some of its weaknesses and failures.



Operation Pedestal: The Fleet that Battled to Malta 1942
by Max Hastings
(William Collins, 336 pages, £25)

August 1942 was a fascinating moment because it was the exact midpoint of the Second World War and a time when the Allies were still on the back foot all over the world. In the far east the Japanese were dominant. In the west, not only had Rommel just pushed the British Eighth Army back to the gates of Cairo, but the Axis air forces were operating from bases all over the Mediterranean, and the Royal Navy almost had to give up on major surface operations in this sea.

Everybody thinks 1940 was Churchill's toughest time, but in many ways 1942 was. He was incredibly unpopular. Although he kept on promising victories, all he seemed able to deliver were defeats like the capture of Tobruk in north Africa and the humiliation of Singapore. Churchill felt desperately embattled, politically. So when people told him, if we can't feed Malta by September the island will have to surrender, Churchill said this is a matter of national pride – we cannot stand another national humiliation. So he gave the order to the Royal Navy: we've got to get supplies to Malta at any cost.

What was the composition of Operation Pedestal and did the British get the balance right?

It was the biggest fleet the Royal Navy deployed in the western hemisphere in the whole war. The navy knew it would have to face all sorts of threats. It would have to face terrific Axis air power and submarines, and it could well face the Italian fleet. Mussolini's fleet was a massive force and if it came out, the British had to have big guns to face them. That meant battleships. So they sent two battleships, and also cruisers because the Italians had a lot of cruisers in their fleet.

Then, probably most importantly, they had to have air cover. What can provide air cover? It's got to be aircraft carriers. How many aircraft carriers did Britain possess? By that stage, seven. They sent four of them on Operation Pedestal. But there was one big problem with the carriers and that was the planes. All they had were these clapped-out Hurricanes and Martlets that really struggled to get up to altitude to fight the attacking bombers. So although the carriers were formidable ships, the aircraft they were flying were pretty so-so.

And then they had a mass of 30-something destroyers and corvettes and other vessels. In all, there was the best part of 50 warships to cover 13 merchant ships and one tanker. It was this fantastic big fleet, but a lot of the admirals thought that the risks were not worth it, because they knew that these cruisers, battleships and carriers were incredibly vulnerable.

The Axis forces only needed to get lucky two or three times and they'd devastate the Royal Navy's major strength. The risks were enormous and the admirals, privately, thought that they were bigger than Malta justified.

How did the Axis first become aware that Operation Pedestal was coming towards them?

The Axis had very good codebreakers, especially breaking British convoy traffic. So they knew ahead of time that the British were coming, and the Germans had revolutionary new infrared technology with which they picked up this fleet. By the time the ships entered the Mediterranean and started sailing east for Malta, all the Axis aircraft and submarines were on high alert.

The Axis intelligence and commanders were stunned by the size of this fleet and wondered if the British could be making this huge

PROFILE

Sir Max Hastings is an author and journalist who has written numerous bestselling books on the history of conflict – especially the Second World War. He also previously served as editor-in-chief of the *Daily Telegraph* and editor of the *Evening Standard*

PHOTOGRAPH BY
FRAN MONKS

commitment just to supply this little pimple in the Mediterranean. They began to wonder if they were trying to run this convoy right the way through to north Africa, to reinforce the Eighth Army.

What were they up to? There was no question that from 10 August 1942, that first day in the Mediterranean, the Axis knew the British were up to something big, but they weren't quite sure what it was.

There is often a perception that the Italian military forces were inferior to the German ones. Does that come through from your research into Pedestal?

There was a horribly nationalistic British joke during the war about the Italians all being idiots and cowards and their tanks only having reverse gears. In truth, the Italians had some very brave fighters and some very good kit, as the British would see. Their submarines were not as good as the German ones, but they had a lot of them in the Mediterranean and their submariners did some impressive things during the battle. In fact, one of their submarine captains delivered one of the most devastating torpedo attacks of the entire war when, one night, with one salvo of torpedoes, he sank one British cruiser, crippled a second, and also crippled the tanker *Ohio*. They also had some terrific torpedo boats, which inflicted devastating losses.

But the Italians had their problems and one of them was Mussolini. The British were terrified that Mussolini was going to send out his surface fleet. Admiral Burrough, who commanded the last phase of Pedestal, said that if the Italian cruisers had got to them, that would have been the end. There wouldn't have been any convoy left. But Mussolini was obsessed with trying to keep his fleet in being; he loved to know that he had all these beautiful battleships and cruisers and he preferred to have them afloat in harbours around Italy rather than at sea risking things against the British.

One key moment was on 12 August, when the British had suffered dreadfully all day from Italian and German submarines, aircraft and so on. That night, Italian cruisers were steaming south to engage Pedestal, and if they had kept going that would have been the end. But Mussolini decided that unless they could get air cover, which only the Germans had the fighters to provide, then he was not prepared to commit them. The Germans insisted that they wanted all their aircraft to keep staging attacks on Pedestal; they weren't interested in escorting the Italian cruisers. That was a German mistake. If they had provided air cover and the cruisers had gone on, then the British would probably have been finished off.

What was the experience like for the sailors during the battles? It must have been terrifying.

The people I'm most awed by are those who manned the engine rooms, because they were the most vulnerable. They knew at every moment that only two or three inches of steel was between them and the ocean, and their chances of survival if the ship was hit were not great. It is spooky that when you look at the casualty list from each ship, you find a very high proportion were engine room crews. And of course there was the noise. Up on deck, one officer wrote that sometimes during these air battles, with bombs crashing around, it was almost as if you couldn't hear anything. But down below, every time a bomb exploded, there was this fantastic echoing clang for miles across the water. And each time they heard this devastating echo, they thought their last hour had come.

Surviving the siege Supplies carried by British merchant vessels are unloaded in Malta in August 1942. The ships that made it to the island provided enough food, fuel and ammunition to prevent Malta from having to surrender

Roger Hill, who was the captain of one of the destroyers, wrote a brilliant account of Pedestal. He described sipping cocoa at 4.30am on the morning of 12 August which turned out to be one of the most terrible days of the Royal Navy's war. People said to him afterwards: "Did you think about being killed? Did you think about what was going to happen to you?" And he said the truth is that he was so busy, he had so much to think about and all these young men depending on him, that he didn't have time to think about being frightened. And I'm sure that was true for a lot of them. The ones who did have time to be frightened were the ones who had time to think, the ones who were flying the Hurricanes, who were manning the guns.

Perhaps the most dramatic part of the story involved the tanker *Ohio*. Why was its fate so important?

The British finally managed to get four merchant vessels through to Malta, but there was one other ship still stuck – a hulk, 100–150 miles out of Malta, being attacked relentlessly by Axis aircraft. And this was *Ohio*. It had been hit twice, it had two crashed enemy aircraft on its deck, its engine rooms were waterlogged, and the engines weren't working. But it had 12,000 tonnes of fuel on board, without which Malta couldn't fuel its aircraft or make any of its machinery work. So that tanker had to get through if Malta was to hold out.

There were two destroyers and a minesweeper around *Ohio*, and together they dragged that tanker the last 100–150 miles. They were moving at a speed of only four or five miles per hour, and at any minute they knew that there could be another Axis submarine attack. But inch by inch, they were getting this ship through.

The seamen were completely exhausted. Hardly anybody had slept for days and they'd been fighting off air attacks. At night, some of them would go aboard *Ohio* and get at the drink and the food on the ship. Some of them actually found a locker of party hats and so they were manning the guns wearing party hats! The captain of one of the destroyers realised his men were utterly exhausted and almost despairing, so he put his gramophone on the bridge and linked it to

"The captain put his gramophone on the bridge and played Glenn Miller's *Chattanooga Choo Choo* over the broadcast system as this little cluster of ships crept towards Malta"

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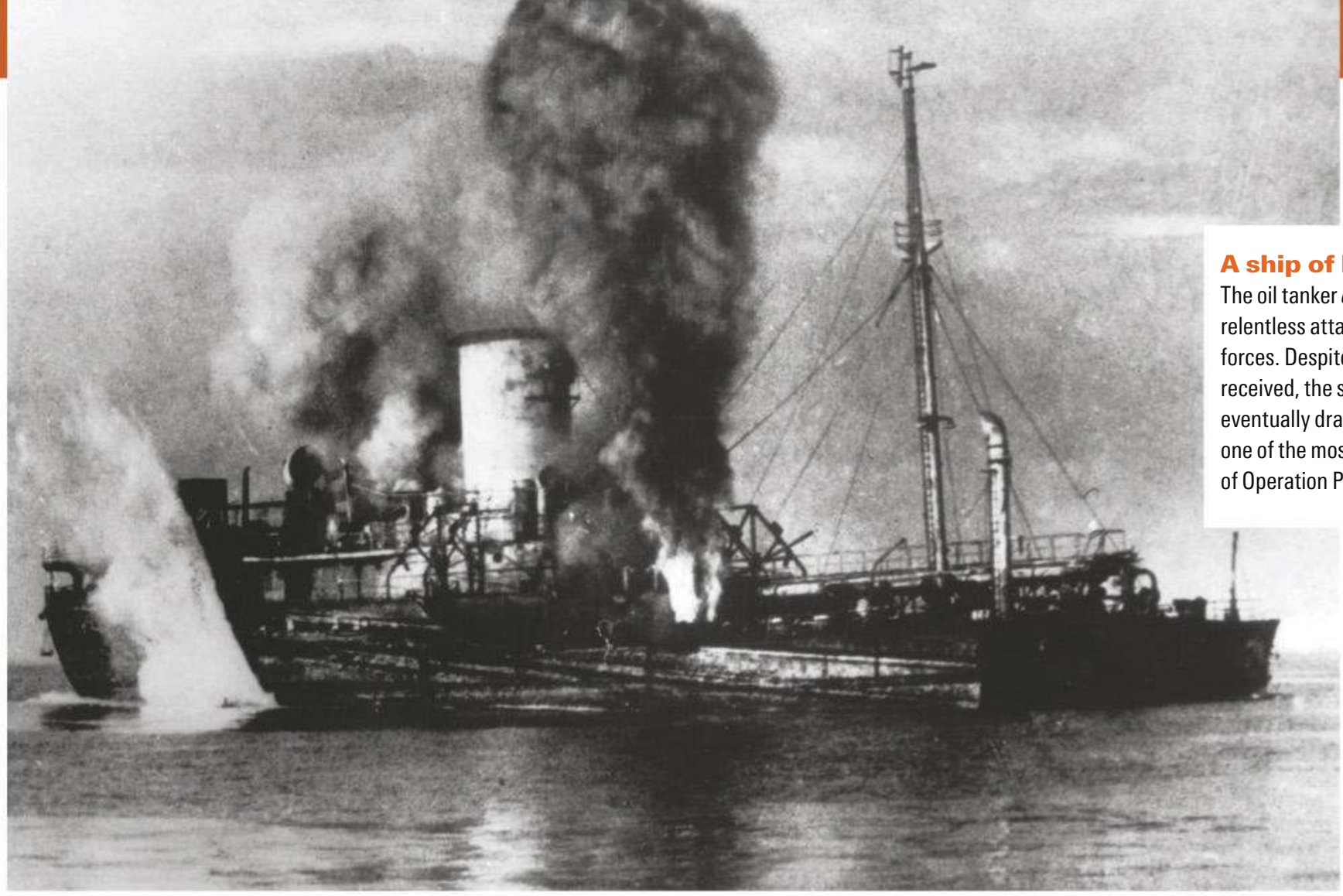


A ship of hope
The oil tanker *Ohio* burns after relentless attacks from Axis forces. Despite the mauling it received, the stricken vessel was eventually dragged into Malta, in one of the most dramatic episodes of Operation Pedestal

the ship's broadcast system. He only had about two records left on board and he chose the most cheerful one, which was Glenn Miller's *Chattanooga Choo Choo*. He played *Chattanooga Choo Choo* over the broadcast system as this little cluster of ships crept towards Malta.

The Axis made a huge mistake. They knew *Ohio* was somewhere out there and they should have realised how vital it was to sink this ship. But they didn't put the effort into it that they should have done, and finally it arrived at the harbour.

There was incredible bravery shown, but also a few instances where ships were perhaps abandoned too soon. What happened there?
You can never expect that everybody's going to be a hero. And almost everyone, on the merchant vessels especially, knew that the statistics showed that most merchantmen in the war sank within 15 minutes of being hit by a bomb or torpedo. They had 15 minutes to get away before, most likely, their ship went to the bottom of the sea. So not too surprisingly, when some ships were hit there was an unseemly rush to abandon ship.

The first merchant ship to be hit was called *Deucalion*. They discovered that it could keep going, but meanwhile, a load of stokers and engine room crew had manned a couple of lifeboats and pulled off, towards a nearby destroyer. But the destroyer captain was a hard man and he said that "when they tried to climb up the scrambling nets, we just kicked their fingers and told them to get back in the boats and get back to the ship", which they did.

In another episode, the cruiser HMS *Manchester* was torpedoed and quite badly hit, but after about half an hour, the engine room staff reported to the captain that they could regain power and start moving again. But the ship had been badly damaged, it probably wouldn't have been able to manage a speed of more than about seven or eight knots. At that moment they were only a mile or two off the coast of Tunisia and the ship's captain, Harold Drew, made a decision. He said, if we keep going at this speed, the odds are overwhelming that, at dawn, Axis aircraft are going to sink us and we've got hundreds of men on this ship. If we abandon this ship now, those men can row ashore to north Africa and live to fight another day.

He made the humane decision to order the ship scuttled. His engine room crew disagreed with him and they told him so at the time. But Drew said that he had to think of all these men and all these lives would be lost if they kept going. So *Manchester* was scuttled and indeed there were hardly any lives lost.

But Churchill's crusades were not to be won by being humane and when Drew returned to England early in 1943, he was court martialled and convicted for having not made his best efforts to save his ship. He was disgraced and never given another sea-going command.

What was the conduct of the battle like on both sides? How well did the two combatants treat each other?
There was certainly more chivalry at sea. The Mediterranean in August was much kinder to people who were shot down or lost their ships than the Arctic or the Atlantic, and both sides were very good about picking up each other's men in the water.

At times things did get rough. For instance, just after the carrier HMS *Eagle* had been sunk by a U-boat, a destroyer, *Wolverine*, spotted an unknown submarine ahead on the surface. This was an Italian submarine, but they didn't know that, they just saw a U-boat. And they increased to maximum speed and rammed it. They didn't stop or make any attempt to pick up survivors, who they heard screaming in the water. And I think that was partly influenced by the fact that they were pretty sick after the sinking of *Eagle*. So chivalry could crack up sometimes when you were having a particularly bad time. But generally speaking, what's remarkable is the respect with which both sides treated each other.

How crucial was it that a small group of merchant vessels did make it to Malta in the end?
If Pedestal hadn't got through, there is no doubt Malta would have had to be surrendered because you couldn't let its people starve to death. Would it have affected the outcome of the war? No. There were much bigger things. There was huge stuff already going on, on the eastern front, which was much more decisive. But as a demonstration of Britain's will to win, it was terribly important.

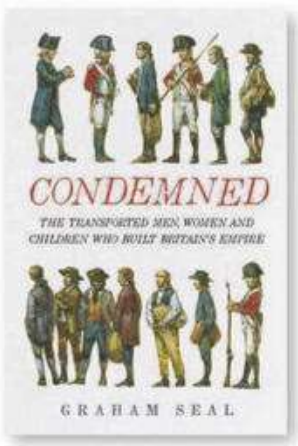
Quite a lot of historians today describe Pedestal as a defeat because of those terrible losses: one carrier at the bottom of the sea, one crippled, two cruisers sunk, two disabled, nine fast merchantmen gone. But I don't agree at all. War is a contest of wills and Churchill was determined to show Stalin, to show the American people, that the British could fight, could bleed, could suffer. And Pedestal, in my eyes, was a triumph of will. That was what mattered. H

TOPFOTO

EMPIRE

Empire of chains

CLARE ANDERSON embarks on a lively journey through a series of convict tales that shed new light on centuries of penal transportation across the British empire



Condemned: The Transported Men, Women and Children Who Built Britain's Empire
by Graham Seal
Yale University Press, 296 pages, £20

The human and cultural dimensions of penal transportation are the focus of this "collective biography" of convicts sent overseas to Britain's imperial possessions.

Some of these convicts were transported following judicial process. In the period before the arrival of the First Fleet in Botany Bay in 1788, though, others were kidnapped, inveigled or otherwise sent extrajudicially to North America and the Caribbean. According to author Graham Seal, over the four centuries in which the policy was in force, there developed a strong association between poverty and transportation. Alongside dissenters and political enemies, this system came also to ensnare vagrants, idlers, thieves, sex workers, orphans and others in what Seal calls an "empire of chains".

Condemned explores this association, taking readers on a series of journeys alongside a cast of "colourful characters". Through recently published work that has mapped penal transportation across the entirety of the British empire, some of these people are already well known. They include Elizabeth Wynn and Magdalene Dutton who, in the 1620s, were reprieved from the gallows and ordered to travel to Guiana with colonial speculators – though it is unclear whether they ever made it to South America.

For Seal, it is the story of Moll King – a criminal working in London from the late 17th century, upon whom Daniel Defoe based his famous novel *Moll Flanders* – that marks the start of public fascination with the process and horrors of transportation. King was shipped to Annapolis, Maryland and escaped back to London in the early 18th century, fuelling the imagination of Defoe.

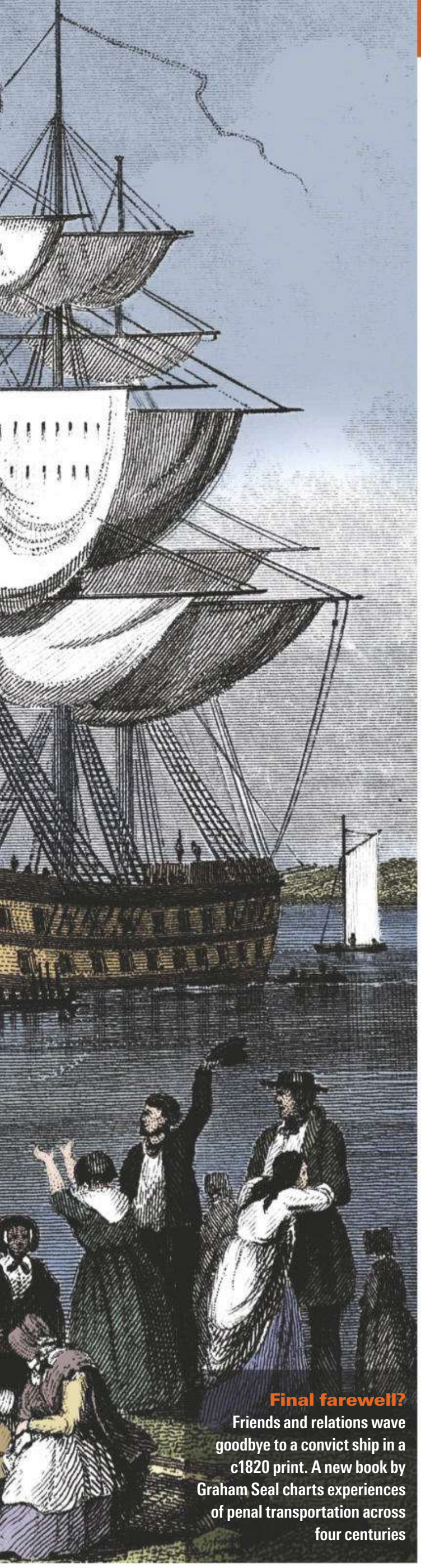
Against this background, Seal also discusses some of the famous incidents where convicts seized ships and escaped. This included the case of Charlotte Badger, who took part in a mutiny on the *Venus* and went to New Zealand, and James Porter, who sailed to Chile on the *Frederick*. Also discussed are the lives and experiences of "Big Mark" Jeffrey and the Irish nationalist John Mitchel. The former, described as a "giant", was a gravedigger on Port Arthur's Island of the Dead in Van Diemen's Land (now Tasmania). The latter served time in both the hulks of Bermuda as well as Van Diemen's Land, before making a dramatic escape.

The book is at its most compelling when it draws on contemporary ballads, press reports, pamphlets and publications to explore British and Irish convict experiences and subcultures in North America, the Caribbean and Australia. Seal presents extended extracts of poems and other convict-penned texts, which make both fresh and illuminating reading. The book is also to be praised for including so much detail on women (always a minority of convicts), though less so for describing a couple of such individuals as lacking conventional physical attractions or having thick ankles. Perhaps because the source base is so different, but also because of unfamiliar historical contexts and historiography, the author is less convincing on British India, the Indian Ocean and other colonial contexts.

In recent years a range of historians have explored the use of transportation systems

"Moll King was shipped to Annapolis and escaped back to London in the early 18th century, fuelling the imagination of author Daniel Defoe"

GETTY IMAGES



Final farewell? Friends and relations wave goodbye to a convict ship in a c1820 print. A new book by Graham Seal charts experiences of penal transportation across four centuries

as a means of governance and of colonial occupation and development. But did the British empire really have a "global transportation strategy", as *Condemned* claims? As Seal notes elsewhere in the book, this process could be a capricious one, notwithstanding the huge variations in convict systems across time and place that are now well established.

Convicts certainly left vivid traces, and the great strength of the book lies in its success in piecing these together. However, this inevitably means that *Condemned* focuses more on the sensational – on acts of violence and brutality, including multiple accounts of flogging, chaining and cruelty – and rather less on the mundane and everyday aspects of penal transportation. That is not to suggest that the process was benign but, rather, a factor of the relative lack of attention given to the building of empire, despite the book's subtitle.

Perhaps Seal's most original contribution is an attempt to connect Australia's colonial past to its post-colonial present. Ultimately, he argues, the institutionalised child migration of the 19th and 20th centuries, now so controversial, can be connected to the history of penal transportation. In order to firmly establish that link, I would like to have learned more about the charitable schemes and institutions of the penal era, mentioned only briefly in the book. I also wondered whether this is relevant only for the former settler colonies, or if a focus on children might give insights into the legacies of Britain's "empire of chains" in other locations around the globe.

Finally, in closing the book, the author refers to Australia's current Pacific Solution – the 21st-century relocation of asylum seekers to detention centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea – as "no different" from the historical bondage of convicts. Is this a connection too far? Or could further analogies be made in terms of the relationship between migration and citizenship in Australia and in other former penal colony sites? There is also the question of contemporary asylum-seeking and migrant labour in places that previously received convicts, notably those that once formed part of British India. Seal is correct that such legacies can be traced to convict pasts, and there remains scope to unpick their complexities. H

Clare Anderson is professor of history at the University of Leicester. Her books include the edited volume *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies* (Bloomsbury, 2018)

AUTHORS ON THE PODCAST

Nathen Amin on Henry VII's path to the throne

"Henry Tudor was by far the unlikeliest man ever to sit on the English throne. For the majority of his lifetime, no one would have thought that this minor Welsh noble would become king. He certainly beat the odds, and he did so pretty much on the back of his own character and determination – and also thanks to a massive stroke of luck. Ultimately, he was the right man, in the right place, at the right time."

Linda Colley on the rise of constitutions

"There have been versions of constitutions in various societies from ancient times. But I wanted to understand why, from around 1750, new kinds of print-based, highly publicised constitutions began to emerge and spread exponentially across continents, as they have continued to do. It didn't seem good enough to me to say: 'it's all about democracy' – a much more wide-ranging factor was the pressures and incidence of war."

Roland Philipps on a Second World War spy

"I was drawn to Mathilde Carré because her story embodies the complexities of wartime morality, and the compromises that were necessary to survive in Nazi-occupied France. At the fall of France, Mathilde felt that her own world was falling apart – and that's when she got drawn into the world of espionage."

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SECOND WORLD WAR

Triumph and tragedy

GILES MILTON applauds a masterful new account of the Special Operations Executive and the female agents who put their lives on the line to sabotage the Nazi war machine

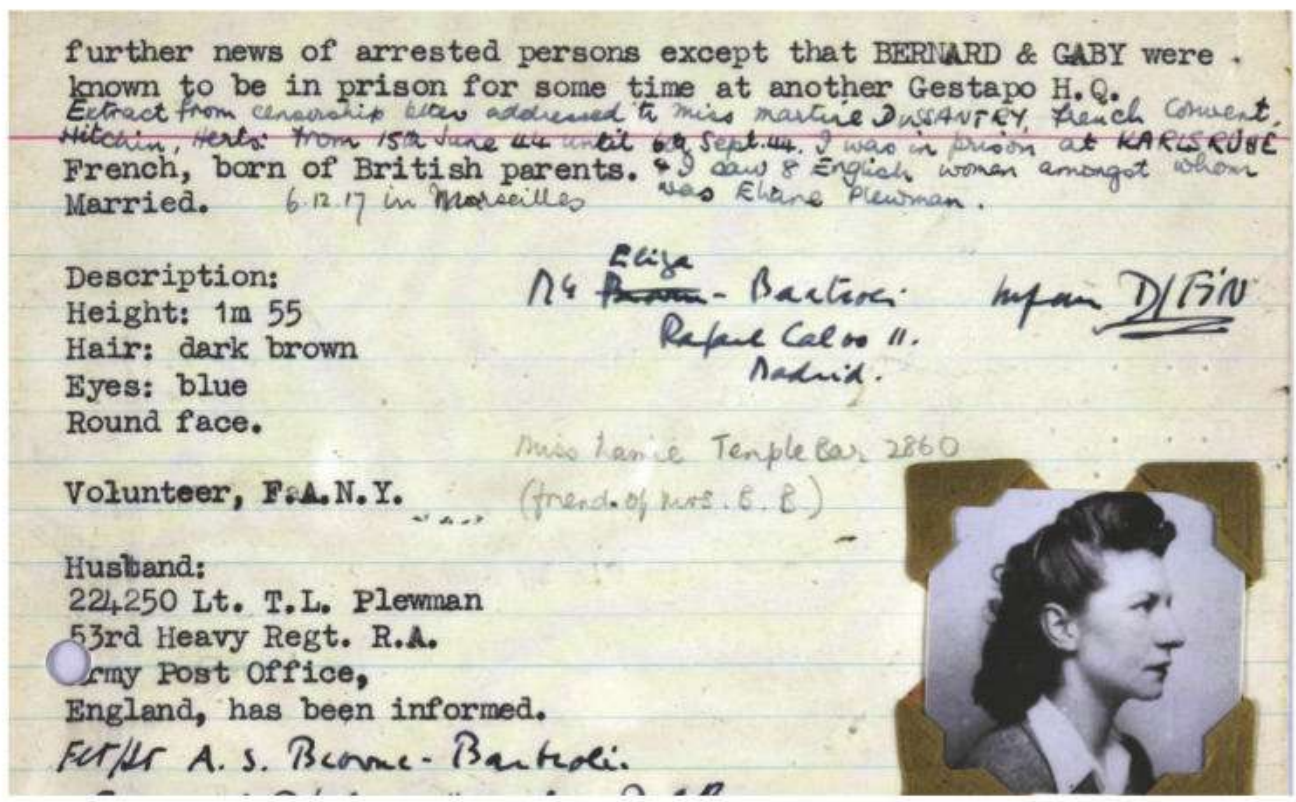
Mission France: The True History of the Women of SOE
by Kate Vigurs
Yale, 328 pages, £20

There has been a flurry of books in recent years about the female agents of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), including multiple biographies of Noor Inayat Khan, Christine Granville (Krystyna Skarbek) and Virginia Hall. There have also been a number of general accounts of SOE women working undercover in Nazi-occupied France, with a focus on oft-repeated stories of high adventure and derring-do.

Kate Vigurs' new book takes a different approach. She has investigated the lives and undercover work of all 39 women who served with the SOE in France, including those whose stories have never before been told. In so doing, she provides a fascinating account of the dangers to which they were exposed.

SOE started to employ women (about 3,200 in total) in the spring of 1942, two years after it was established with a mission to "set Europe ablaze". Alongside the women who worked in SOE's Baker Street headquarters were others – all fluent French speakers – who were sent into the field as secret agents. Their work was skilled and highly dangerous, requiring specialist training in Morse code, wireless transmission, fieldcraft and pistol shooting. Once their training was complete, agents would be dropped into France (often at night, by parachute) where they were to support the work of the French Resistance.

Landing in the dark was always terrifying and often disastrous. When Éliane Plewman parachuted into France on 14 August 1943, the promised support network was nowhere to be found. There were no landing lights and no reception committee. She managed to locate the pre-agreed safe house run by the Resistance, only to discover that the Gestapo had arrested all the occupants. Plewman showed considerable initiative in making her way to Marseilles and joining a local Resistance network, undertaking vital work as a courier. Not content with delivering messages (and dodging the Gestapo in the process), she also carried out major acts of sabotage. In one spectacular operation she destroyed 30 locomotives, causing a significant setback to the German war effort.


further news of arrested persons except that BERNARD & GABY were known to be in prison for some time at another Gestapo H.Q.
Extract from censorship letter addressed to miss martine DUSSAUTOY, French Convent, Hitchin, Herts: from 15th June 44 until 6th Sept. 44. I was in prison at KARLSRUHE
French, born of British parents. I saw a English woman amongst whom
Married. 6.12.17 in Marseilles was Elaine Plewman.
Description:
Height: 1m 55
Hair: dark brown
Eyes: blue
Round face.
Volunteer, F.A.N.Y.
Husband:
224250 Lt. T.L. Plewman
53rd Heavy Regt. R.A.
Army Post Office,
England, has been informed.
Capt A. S. Bourne-Bartoli.

Portrait of courage Part of a case file for Éliane Plewman, a British SOE agent who went undercover in France in 1943. Plewman is one of 39 women whose stories form the basis of a new book by Kate Vigurs

> **"Four of the female operatives were killed by lethal injection; one was said to have been still alive when bundled into the oven for cremation"**

Equally courageous was Nancy Wake, whose well-publicised story loses nothing in the retelling. On parachuting in, she had the misfortune to land in a tree, prompting a quip from the Resistance fighter sent to meet her: "I hope that all trees in France bear such beautiful fruit this year." Wake's response was brusque: "Cut out that bullshit and get me out of this tree." She would later play a leading role in the so-called "Freelance" Resistance network, which numbered more than 7,500 guerrilla fighters.

SOE's F (French) Section had many successes, including impressive acts of sabotage, assassination and the arrangement of huge arms drops from England. But there were also tragic failures and arrests. The final chapters of Vigurs' book detail the grim fates of those captured by the Nazis.

Interrogation and torture were followed by brutal incarceration in concentration camps. Four of the female operatives were killed by lethal injection; one of the four – never identified – was said to have been still alive when bundled into the oven for cremation. Another four were abused and then murdered at Dachau. Only a few of those captured managed to escape with their lives.

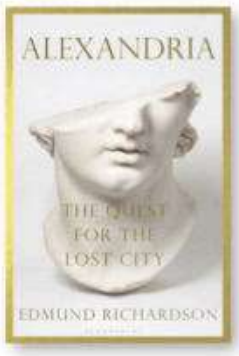
Vigurs has produced a meticulously researched and highly readable historical narrative. It's a tale of triumph and tragedy, of romance but also ruin: 14 of F Section's heroines died in hideous circumstances. *Mission France* stands as a fitting epitaph to their courage and humanity. H

Giles Milton's new book, *Checkmate in Berlin*, will be published by John Murray in late May

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

ANCIENT

Worlds collide



Alexandria: The Quest for the Lost City
by Edmund Richardson
Bloomsbury, 352 pages, £25

In this immensely enjoyable book, Edmund Richardson takes us on parallel journeys to discover a "lost city". First, we follow his own journey through the forests of archives, libraries and other hidden treasure troves that he has combed over the past decade. Simultaneously, we trace the mission, painstakingly reconstructed here, undertaken by 19th-century explorer and archaeologist Charles Masson, who deserted the army to hunt for Alexandria.

The two journeys intersect in numerous ways. Richardson himself walks in the footsteps of his protagonist, visiting the places where Masson stayed. As a result, the book is pleasingly redolent of the locations it describes. More intriguingly and entertainingly, though, the two journeys collide as the author does battle with Masson's accounts, trying to unpick the elaborate web of tales, legends and outright lies that the latter wove during and about his travels. As Richardson puts it, "despite the best efforts of almost everyone, this has been a true story".

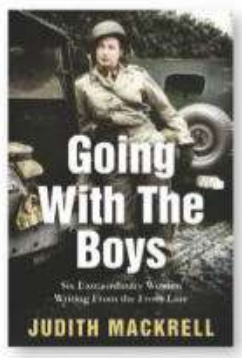
The author clearly picked up Masson's love of storytelling along the way, as well as his skill for drawing the reader in with a play of smoke and mirrors. The Alexandria of the title, for instance, is not – as you may at first have thought – the Alexandria of Egypt but one of its many other namesakes: Alexandria "Beneath the Mountains" in modern-day Afghanistan. And when Richardson happily recounts a full chapter of Masson's early travels, he ends the chapter pulling the rug out from under his own narrative by revealing that everything he has just told us may not actually be true.

The result is a highly entertaining representation of the world of 19th-century India and Afghanistan, and of the daredevil antics of an adventurer hooked on the past, looking to survive, prosper and make his mark in a world of shifting sands and shadows. H

Michael Scott, professor of classics and ancient history at the University of Warwick

SECOND WORLD WAR

Daring dispatches



Going with the Boys: Six Extraordinary Women Writing from the Front Line
by Judith Mackrell
Pan Macmillan, 456 pages, £20

War has long been understood as men's business. The memoirs of generals and front-line soldiers compete for shelf space with edited collections of letters from soldiers and military histories largely written by men. This book is a salutary reminder that it is not only men who experience wars, and it is not only men who report on them. War correspondents such as *The Sunday Times'* Marie Colvin, killed in Syria covering the siege of Homs in 2012, have brought the realities of war into our homes, bearing witness to human suffering while reporting battles, advances and retreats.

Mackrell's lively book tells the stories of six of the female journalists who reported on the Second World War. Some, such as Martha Gellhorn and Lee Miller, are well known, others, like Virginia Cowles and Helen Kirkpatrick, now less so. Clare Hollingworth, the only British war correspondent included here, filed the first eyewitness account of the German invasion of Poland in 1939.

Mackrell also tells the story of the war through their writing. As France fell in the early summer of 1940, Cowles travelled to Paris. Her description of the exodus from that city as Nazi troops approached – "think of noise and confusion, of the thick smell of petrol, of the scraping of automobile gears, of shouts, wails, curses and tears" – is still a vivid evocation of the impact of war today.

The women whose lives and work are recounted here regularly put their lives in danger – perhaps none more so than Sigrid Schultz, whose reports from Berlin conveyed the horror of Hitler's regime to an American audience. In 1945 she returned, with fellow correspondents Kirkpatrick and Ed Murrow, to report on the liberation of Buchenwald concentration camp. Mackrell reveals the full extent of the danger faced by Schultz only at the end of this gripping book. Like the copy filed by her subjects, it is an essential read. H

Lucy Noakes, author of *Dying for the Nation: Death, Grief and Bereavement in Second World War Britain* (Manchester University Press, 2020)

GETTY IMAGES

YOU RECOMMEND

We asked our Twitter followers to nominate their favourite historical novels that throw real history out of the window...

@mojorisingkc
Robert Harris's *Fatherland* imagines a world in which Germany won the war. Excellent and believable take on what the Third Reich might have appeared like 15 years later.

@DiogoMorg
The Years of Rice and Salt really goes for it, with the Black Death killing more than 90 per cent of Europe's population, and the Enlightenment happening in central Asia.

@david86788046
Asterix the Gaul!

@hextall_lufc
The Terror by Dan Simmons. It doesn't throw real history out the window but, rather, does a great job of blending many of the actual possible events with some obvious fiction.

@Uniped1975
The Berkut by Joseph Heywood is a fantastic alternative history about Hitler's fate in the last days of the war in Berlin. Just brilliant.

@Vincent_Pate
1632 by Eric Flint is about time travel into the past, so history does get thrown out the window. Does that count?

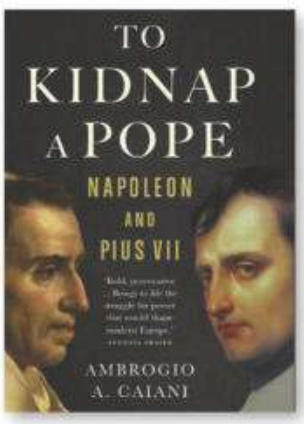
@Rhian_Ivory
Hester and Crow by Katy Moran. Imagine that Napoleon Bonaparte, instead of Wellington, has won the battle of Waterloo, and that his ex-wife, Empress Josephine, is presiding over French-occupied England – a brilliant "what if?" premise!

@HeleneSineux
Civilisations by Laurent Binet, imagining that Christopher Columbus failed to colonise the Americas, and that the Incas conquered Europe instead. Loved it!

19TH CENTURY

Papal power struggle

ALAN FORREST recommends an account of a toxic political tug-of-war that descended into kidnap and imprisonment, redefining relations between church and state in the process



To Kidnap a Pope: Napoleon and Pius VII
by Ambrogio A Caiani
Yale, 376 pages, £20

In March 1800, following a tense and divisive conclave that dragged on for more than three months, Barnaba Chiaramonti was elected to the papacy, taking the pontifical name of Pius VII. To many who knew him, he seemed modest and unassuming – in the words of the author of this new book, "a meek Italian Benedictine monk" – but he would soon show a steely and stubborn side to his character. The new pope's election came at a moment when relations between church and state in Europe had been undermined by Enlightenment humanism and the anticlericalism of the French Revolution, and for most of his pontificate he would face in Napoleon Bonaparte the most ruthless of adversaries.

In this enthralling study, Ambrogio Caiani gives a vivid account of the struggle between the two men, which would continue virtually unabated until Napoleon's death on St Helena in 1821. He is commendably even-handed in his analysis, presenting it both as a personal tussle between two dogged opponents and as a clash between contrasting visions of the world: a Catholicism ever more drawn to counter-revolutionary reaction, and an emperor consciously pursuing his own brand of modernity.

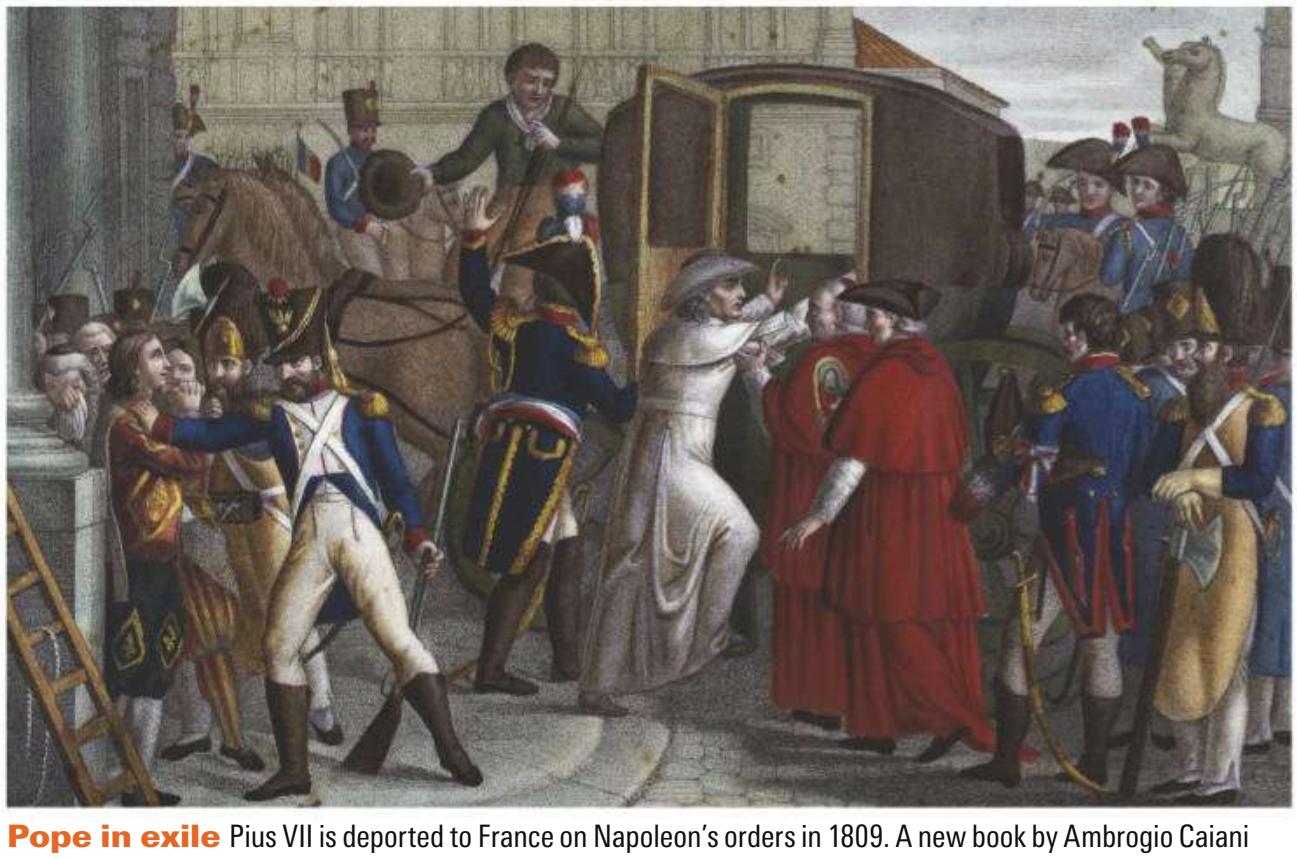
At first, the pope and first consul showed an apparent willingness to compromise as they negotiated a concordat that would restore Catholic worship to France. Pius even agreed to officiate at Napoleon's imperial coronation in Notre-Dame in 1804. But their relationship swiftly degraded into mutual recrimination, leading in 1809 to the kidnapping of the title and the pope's five-year imprisonment at Napoleon's hands.

The book opens with a dramatic account of that kidnapping, carried out by Neapolitan troops and imperial gendarmes in the Quirinal Palace in Rome – an act that shocked Catholic Europe and brutally exposed Napoleon's determination to brook no interference from Rome. In his dealings with Pius, Napoleon can seem a hectoring bully, prepared to send in the army when negotiations broke down – but, where political expediency demanded concessions, he would adopt a more pragmatic and emollient tone. Besides, this book is not all about Napoleon. It is a parallel study of two powerful protagonists who never doubted the rightness of their cause and who were in many ways well matched. The author has worked intensively in archives in the Vatican and across Europe to reassess papal policy. Chiaramonti, as much as Napoleon, is the subject of his study, and the picture that emerges is not wholly flattering. He was a man of the ancien régime, intransigent in defence of privilege and of the church's temporal power.

> **"Their relationship swiftly degraded into mutual recrimination, leading in 1809 to the pope's five-year imprisonment at Napoleon's hands"**

Their conflict would shape relations between church and state in France for generations to come, and would ensure that anticlericalism remained a hallmark of French republicanism throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. But it also raises interesting questions about Napoleon's own religious convictions. Did he misunderstand Pius or – sharing a common Italian heritage – did he understand him only too well? Caiani makes it clear that he does not see Napoleon as anti-Catholic or secular in outlook (unlike many of his 19th-century detractors) but, rather, as "a child of the Enlightenment, sharing its distrust of a First Estate greedy for temporal power". By his stubborn resistance to change, Chiaramonti must share responsibility for the bitterness that followed. H

Alan Forrest is emeritus professor of modern history at the University of York



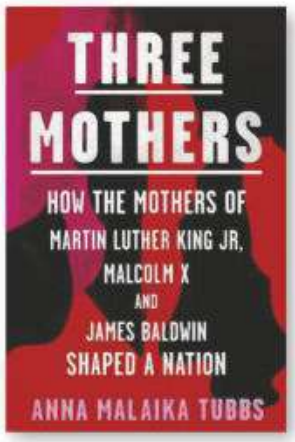
AKG-IMAGES

Pope in exile Pius VII is deported to France on Napoleon's orders in 1809. A new book by Ambrogio Caiani charts the disintegration of their relationship, and the far-reaching consequences of that schism

CIVIL RIGHTS

Strength and fragility

HETTIE V WILLIAMS applauds a moving volume celebrating the overlooked mothers of civil rights leaders



Three Mothers: How the Mothers of Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X and James Baldwin Shaped a Nation
by Anna Malaika Tubbs
HarperCollins,
272 pages, £18.99

This passionate historical narrative recounts the lives of Alberta King, Louise Little and Berdis Baldwin, the mothers of Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X and James Baldwin. As Tubbs notes, whereas those "world-changing men" are easily recognised in historical texts, their mothers have been overlooked, forgotten and nearly erased from histories on the struggle for black equality in the United States. These three women, she contends, not only gave birth to three extraordinary men but also "to the civil rights movement itself".

As well as being a clear and multifaceted biographical sketch, this is also a celebration of black motherhood. Tubbs uses their stories to "celebrate knowledge passed from generation to generation through the bodies and teachings of black women... Because of who Alberta, Berdis and Louise were, Martin, James and Malcolm were able to become the great leaders we revere."

Three Mothers is in many ways a work of excavation, in that the author seeks not only to recover black motherhood but also the value of black life. In this at times haunting narrative, she illustrates how the three mothers taught their sons that they had a right to live, love and create, while also providing them with guidance and strategies on survival. In essence, they taught their sons that their lives mattered.

> "The author seeks not only to recover black motherhood but also the value of black life"

ALAMY

To support her analysis, Tubbs uses an array of sources, including letters, periodicals, newspapers and more traditional archival material. She begins by sharing with her readers an evocative story of her own journey into motherhood – revealing the very real fears that black women face in childbirth and beyond – before segueing into a discussion of the three mothers.

Born in the early 20th century at the height of the Jim Crow era, Alberta, Louise and Berdis lived lives of resistance, devotion to faith, and commitment to community while pushing back against the challenges that came their way. In doing so, they helped to cultivate the development of a black revolution that evolved through the mid-20th century.

Tubbs shows us how the three mothers shaped the lives of their sons in different ways. Alberta King took a conservative role as a mother who emphasised hard work, dignity and discipline. Louise Little, a more independent woman, was accustomed to "speaking her truth". And Berdis, who was known to be a letter writer, encouraged James to express his ideas through the written word while shielding her children against her husband's rage. Though Tubbs demonstrates the strength of these women, she rejects the stereotype of the "strong black woman" by arguing that these three mothers "displayed a balance between unparalleled strength and an acceptance of their own fragility".

In this vivid, humanistic book, black women are held up as pillars of the community during the civil rights movement, valuing faith and family. This text goes a long way in helping to counter stereotypes about black women, while carving out a space for stories of black women and mothers in the larger narrative of US history. It is pertinent that, in her conclusion, Tubbs reminds us how "disregard for black women's lives remains prominent" despite the contributions they have made to history – including shaping the emergence of black nationalism and civil rights activism. H

Hettie V Williams is assistant professor of African-American history at Monmouth University, New Jersey

FROM FACT TO FICTION

Sixth time lucky

Alison Weir on *Katharine Parr*, the final instalment in her Six Tudor Queens series

What are the challenges of depicting characters as familiar as Henry VIII and his wives in fiction?
With any subject that attracts a lot of attention and debate, it's important to keep the narrative moving along. A novelist has to make choices, where a historian would lay out the evidence and suggest theories. Such choices can prove controversial, but there can be perils in whatever path you take. Language is another challenge – how far do you modernise Tudor English, when some of the source material is well known?

What popular misconceptions about Katharine Parr have you encountered?
Little attention is paid to the fact that she had two husbands before Henry VIII. Those earlier years of her life saw both drama and tragedy, and helped to shape her outlook and religious views. Some still see her primarily as Henry's nurse – a misconception fostered by the Victorians.

Katharine doesn't get as much time in the spotlight as some of Henry's other wives. What makes her worthy of attention?
Katharine is interesting because she lived five different lives over the course of one. And because she left such a mass of letters and written works, her character is also more accessible than some of Henry VIII's earlier wives. She was the first queen to have her books published, and the first to embrace Protestant views. Many think that was Anne Boleyn, but Katharine was more radical.

Katharine is remembered as the wife who "survived". What happened to her after Henry's death?
She married Thomas, Lord Seymour, and retired to Chelsea Palace, then suffered betrayal and tragedy. To reveal any more would be a spoiler!

Katharine Parr: The Sixth Wife
by Alison Weir
Headline, 528 pages, £20

WATCH

Blood on the tracks

How do you convey the privations and peril endured by those who fled north to escape a life of slavery in the American South? In 2016, the solution adopted by American author Colson Whitehead was to depict *The Underground Railroad* not as a metaphorical route but as a secret network of subterranean tracks and tunnels.

It's a brilliantly simple and yet visual idea, so it's no surprise that the novel has been adapted into a TV series. Directed by Barry Jenkins, who won an Academy Award for his adapted screenplay for *Moonlight* (2016), the 10-part adaptation stars Thuso Mbedu as Cora, who runs away from a plantation in Georgia. Joel Edgerton plays Ridgeway, the slave catcher obsessed with capturing her.

The Underground Railroad
Amazon Prime / Streaming from Friday 14 May

AMAZON PRIME

ENCOUNTERS

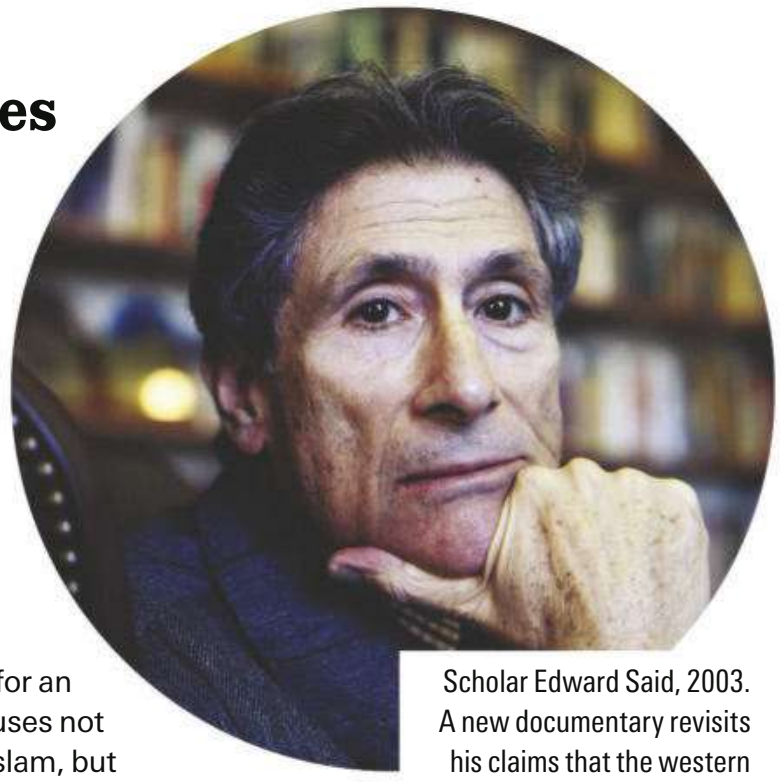
DIARY: LISTEN / WATCH / TASTE

By **Jonathan Wright**, **Samantha Nott** and **Matt Elton**

Perilous route
Thuso Mbedu plays Cora (right), a runaway slave who seeks freedom via the underground railroad

LISTEN

Under western eyes



Scholar Edward Said, 2003. A new documentary revisits his claims that the western press distorted Islam's image

Jerusalem-born Edward W Said's *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* was first published in 1981. As the title suggests, a core theme of the book, part of an influential trilogy of works, was that the western media distorted the image of Islam. Four decades later, how well do Said's arguments stack up?

It's a question explored by the writer and journalist Nesrine Malik for an *Archive on 4* documentary that focuses not just on outside representations of Islam, but also on how people responded to the ideas of Said (1935–2003), a public intellectual, one of the founding fathers of post-colonial studies and a professor of literature at Columbia University.

The book emerged from Said charting responses to the 1979 Iranian Revolution, when coverage created an impression of "the utmost negative sort of evil emanation… as if the main business of Muslims was to threaten and try to kill Americans". Updating the book 16 years later, following the Gulf War, he found the situation even worse.

With the help of the archives, Malik explores how Said challenged the idea of a "clash of civilisations". She also considers what his work could teach us now, and what he might have made of the age of social media.

Archive on 4: Covering Edward Said – 40 Years of Islam, Media and the West
BBC Radio 4 / Saturday 5 June

LISTEN

Digging for history

The past plays into the present in often surprising ways. That's one of the underlying themes in a podcast from BBC Scotland that, in charting "the more unusual aspects of contemporary life" north of the border, often comes across stories rooted in history – as well as material that will surely be hugely valuable to future historians.

One of the 11 episodes, for example, is devoted to a magazine called *The Digger* (pictured below). First published in 2004, it covers crime in the west of Scotland – but from an unusual perspective. Its mission statement is to "report on unemployed and low income workers who come into contact with the justice system from arrest through the police, prosecution and courts".

Other subjects explored in the series include Dundonians looking to reclaim their native dialect, embalming and the history of perfumery.

Our Scotland
BBC Scotland podcast / Available now on BBC Sounds

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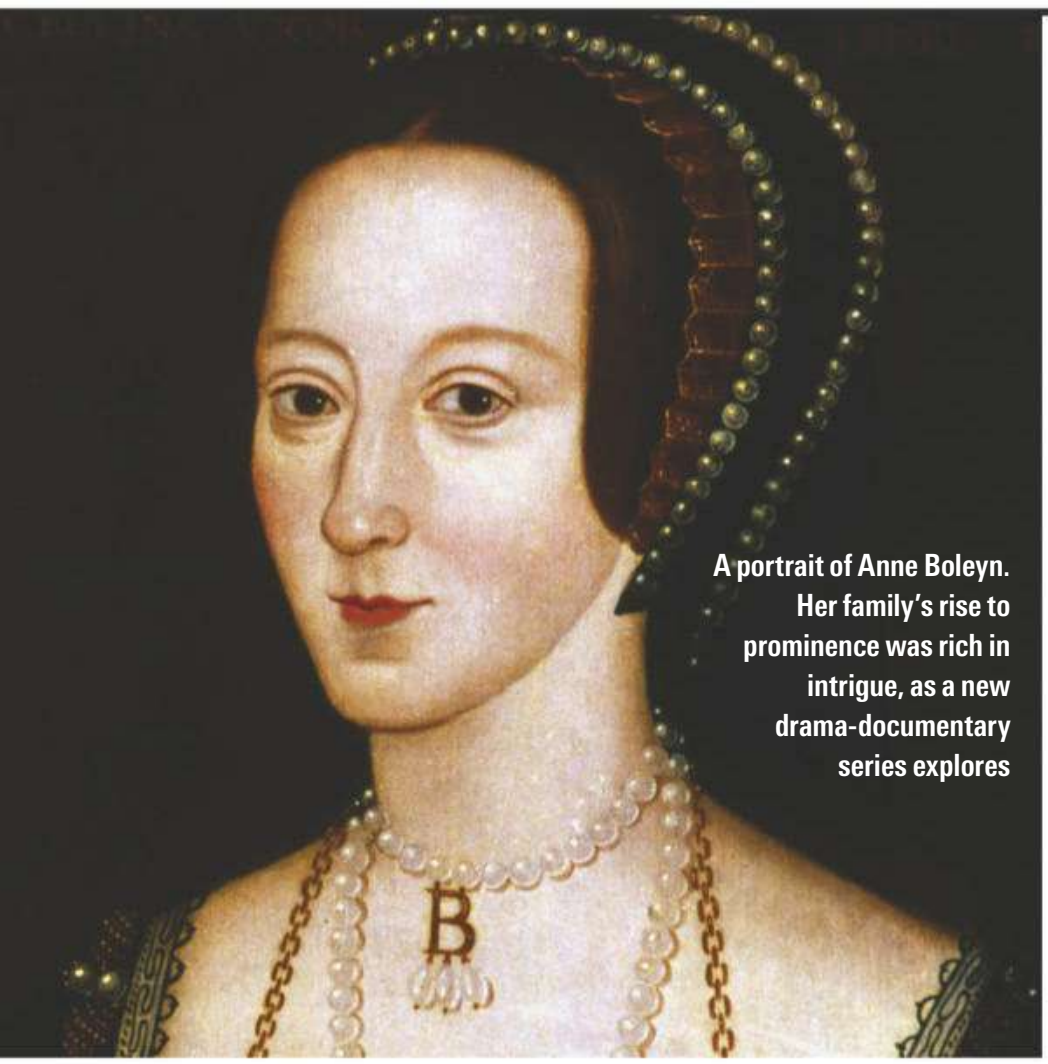


A portrait of Anne Boleyn. Her family's rise to prominence was rich in intrigue, as a new drama-documentary series explores

WATCH

Dynastic ambitions

As the story of Thomas Boleyn attests, the tradition of a rising and wealthy family joining forces via marriage with a noble but financially challenged clan has a long tradition in England. By 1499, Boleyn – who owed his position in society in great part to money made from the wool trade – had married Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Thomas Howard, the second Duke of Norfolk.

The Boleyns went on to become one of the most important families of the Tudor era, reaching the height of their power when Thomas and Elizabeth's daughter married Henry VIII in 1533.

If the broad outline of this story is familiar, not least because of the grisly fates endured by Anne and her brother, George – both beheaded amid accusations of treason and incest in 1536 – it's a story not often told from the perspective of the Boleyns. A new three-part BBC drama-documentary series addresses that omission. It's a story rich in intrigue, from tensions between Thomas and his brother-in-law, Thomas Howard, to the cunning machinations of Thomas Cromwell, the Boleyns' most formidable enemy.

It's also a tale with a glorious coda – at least if we're to see the world from the Boleyns' perspective: the accession to the throne of Anne's daughter, Elizabeth, in 1558.

The Boleyns: An Infamous Family (title TBC)
BBC Two / June

GETTY IMAGES

A bronze of Medusa. She and three other mythological figures are the focus of Natalie Haynes' new series

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN

LISTEN

Classical stories

Writer and critic Natalie Haynes is obsessed with the ancient world and, using skills honed on the comedy circuit, also has a knack for bringing the past vividly to life. It's a gift she employs again in the seventh series of *Natalie Haynes Stands Up for the Classics*, this time focusing on four female figures from Greek mythology: Medusa, Pandora, Jocasta and Clytemnestra.

Not for the first time, Haynes discovers stories that have plenty to tell us about how we have seen the world down the years – and, indeed, still do today. Why is it, for example, that Medusa – she of the serpentine hair and stony gaze – has so often been portrayed as a figure to be loathed? This is, after all, someone made a monster by the actions of capricious gods. And why is Midas, a character whose fate in many respects resembles that of Medusa, more often portrayed as someone to pity?

The show also features contributions from Professor Edith Hall of King's College London and a range of different guests. For the programme on Medusa, Haynes talks with illustrator Chris Riddell as he sketches the mythological figure, musing on how she managed her hair and whether super-sunglasses might have prevented her from lithifying everyone upon whom she gazed.

Natalie Haynes Stands Up for the Classics
BBC Radio 4 / From Tuesday 18 May

MORE FROM US

Natalie Haynes talked about women in Greek myths on our **podcast**: *historyextra.com/greek-myths-podcast*

HISTORY ON THE BOX

"We often talk about disasters and dynasties, but not the background successes that changed our lives"

Historian and broadcaster **DAVID OLUSOGA** tells us about his new four-part series on the breakthroughs that have helped humanity conquer some of the world's deadliest diseases – and double our life expectancies

What story do you tell in *Extra Life*?
It's traditional in television history to say that everything is the most important story in the world. I try not to say that, but there is an argument that *Extra Life* tells one of the most important stories in history by talking about some of our great successes.

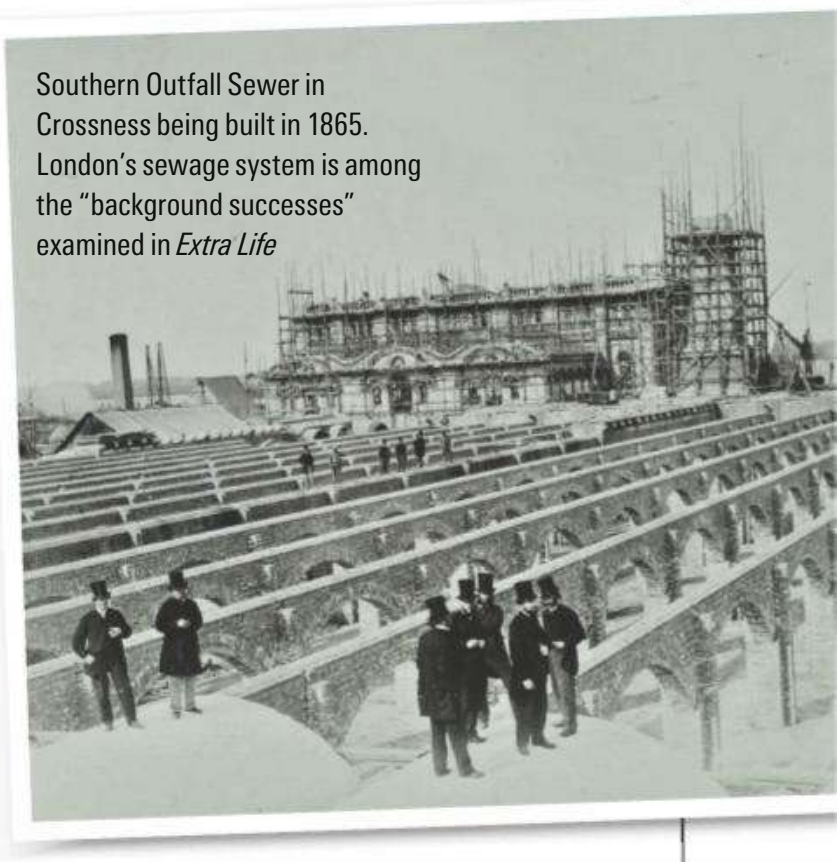
We talk about disasters, we talk about wars, we talk about dynasties, but we don't tend to talk about the background successes that have changed everyone's lives. Public health, medicine, vaccines, behavioural changes – these things have absolutely transformed our lives. The fundamental victory here, the doubling of our lifespans, is a phenomenal achievement.

So *Extra Life* is essentially a series about things working?
Yes. One of the things I've always been interested in is that, if you look at the plans for hospitals in the 19th and early 20th centuries, you will see a sepsis ward for people who have certain forms of infections, sometimes caught during surgery. And that whole branch of medicine, the care of people who are suffering or dying of sepsis, doesn't exist anymore because of antibiotics. So nobody walks into a hospital these days and goes: "Isn't it amazing we don't have septic wards?" They just ceased to exist and almost slipped from memory.

Did you encounter historical characters you especially admired?
I'm very interested in how the Victorians redesigned their cities, how they redesigned the movement of water within cities and the management of sewage – as well as the work of figures such as William Farr [1807–83]. He was an epidemiologist and a statistician, not a very glamorous figure, and yet he is one of the key minds in the story of how we made our industrial cities survivable in the 19th century. He did it by number crunching. He was the person who demonstrated what the curve on the graph of an epidemic looks like. We've spent the past 12 months talking about flattening the curve. That is the language of William Farr.

What was it like working with your co-presenter, the writer Steven Johnson?
He's one of the writers whose books I read partly for the content and partly to try to steal good ideas! He's a remarkable intellect, a fascinating person to get into conversations with. We've long wanted to make this series. The irony is the series had already been planned, we'd already written about what we wanted to do, before the pandemic. It's almost like, in the most unfortunate and awful of ways, the world caught up with our plans. H

Extra Life: A Short History of Living Longer is set to begin on BBC Four on Wednesday 12 May. It will also be available to stream via BBC iPlayer



Southern Outfall Sewer in Crossness being built in 1865. London's sewage system is among the "background successes" examined in *Extra Life*

TASTE

Reuben Sandwich

It's not often that a sandwich is described as "controversial", yet it's a distinction that very much applies to this fried fusion of meat and cheese. Debate continues to rage online about its origin story: one version holds that it was invented in the Nebraska city of Ohama in the 1920s; another that it was created by the owner of a delicatessen in New York in the previous decade. Regardless of its provenance, this is hearty, messy, American fare. Perfect served with pickles.

Difficulty: 1/10
Cooking time: 10 mins

INGREDIENTS

Two slices of rye bread
80g sliced salt beef or pastrami
Two slices of emmental cheese
Two tablespoons of sauerkraut
Butter
Dill pickles to serve

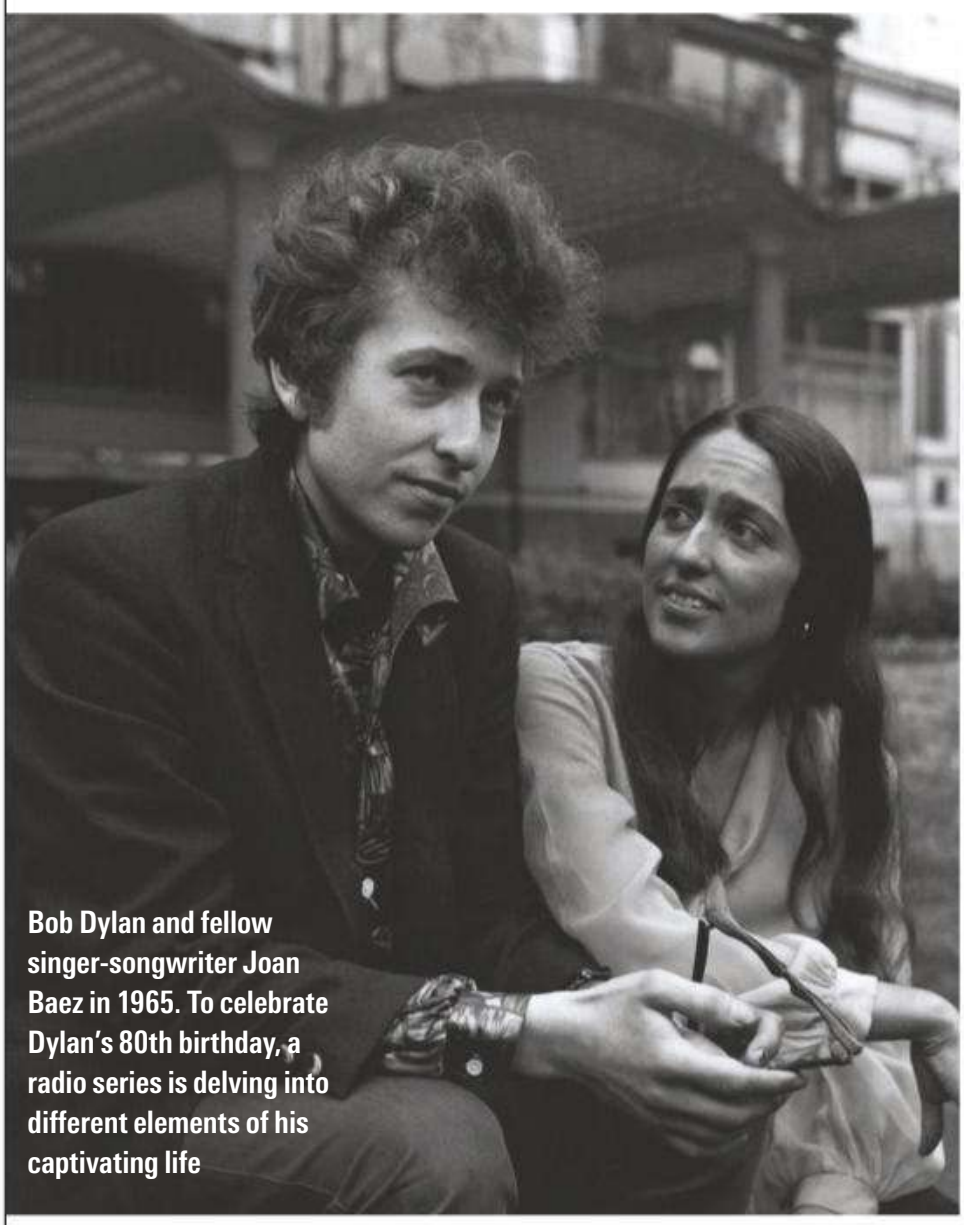
For the dressing:
One tablespoon of mayonnaise
One teaspoon of horseradish sauce
Half a tablespoon of tomato ketchup
One spring onion, very finely chopped

METHOD

1. Mix the dressing ingredients.
2. Spread one side of the bread with dressing, then pile on the pastrami, cheese and sauerkraut. Top with the other slice of bread.
3. Spread the outside of the sandwich with butter, then fry in a hot non-stick pan until the outside is golden and toasted and the cheese has begun to melt. Serve with pickles.

Featuring meat and melted cheese, the Reuben Sandwich is the epitome of American comfort food

Recipe by Olive magazine: bit.ly/2QVeWn5



Bob Dylan and fellow singer-songwriter Joan Baez in 1965. To celebrate Dylan's 80th birthday, a radio series is delving into different elements of his captivating life

LISTEN

Restless troubadour

Of this much we can be sure: on 24 May 1941, in the port city of Duluth, Minnesota, Robert Allen Zimmerman was born. In the subsequent decades, the man who would find fame as Bob Dylan has consistently defied the idea of being pinned down or categorised. As Dylan himself put it on his most recent album, *Rough And Rowdy Ways*, "I Contain Multitudes."

It's therefore hardly surprising that Dylan, even before he became the recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, had become a subject for serious academic studies – Dylanology. Step forward one of its cleverest practitioners, Sean Latham, director of the Institute for Bob Dylan Studies at the University of Tulsa, who as part of programming to mark the musician's 80th birthday, shows us Dylan as both a storyteller and, in his readiness to move on and explore new ideas, an escape artist.

Each of the five weekday episodes in Latham's series focuses on a different part of Dylan's life. 'Audience – Fame, Fury, and Fate,' for instance, covers the tumultuous years from 1964–66, when an amphetamine-powered Dylan battled with factions of his own audience, resentful at Dylan going electric, and with the idea of his own fame.

Among other Dylan-themed highlights, listen out too for **Archive on 4: Bob Dylan: Verbatim** (Saturday 22 May), featuring interview clips with the man himself.

It Ain't Me You're Looking For: Bob Dylan at 80
BBC Radio 4 / Monday 17 May

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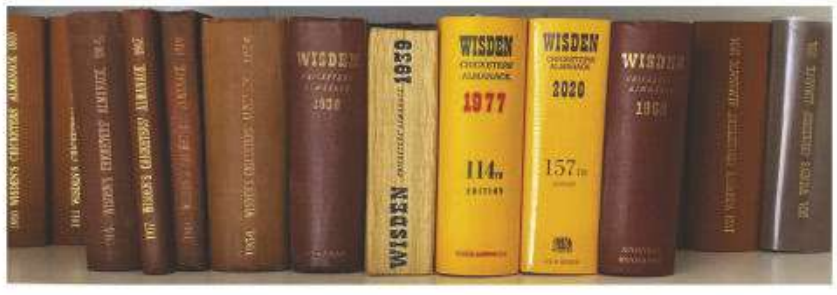

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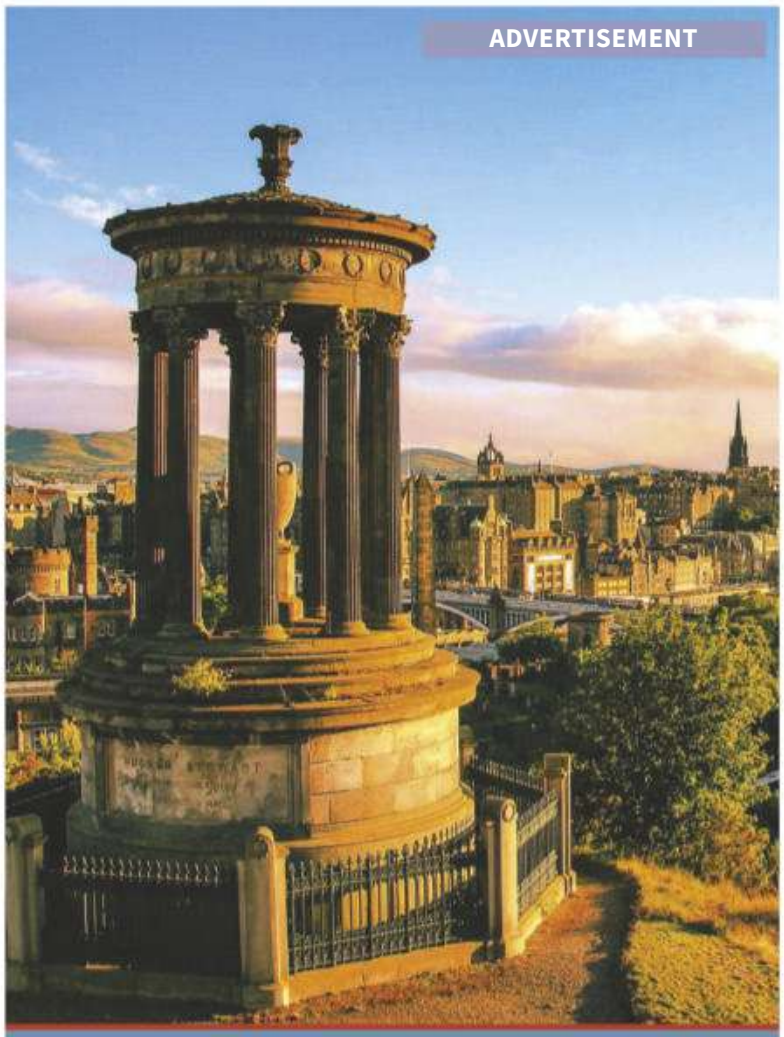

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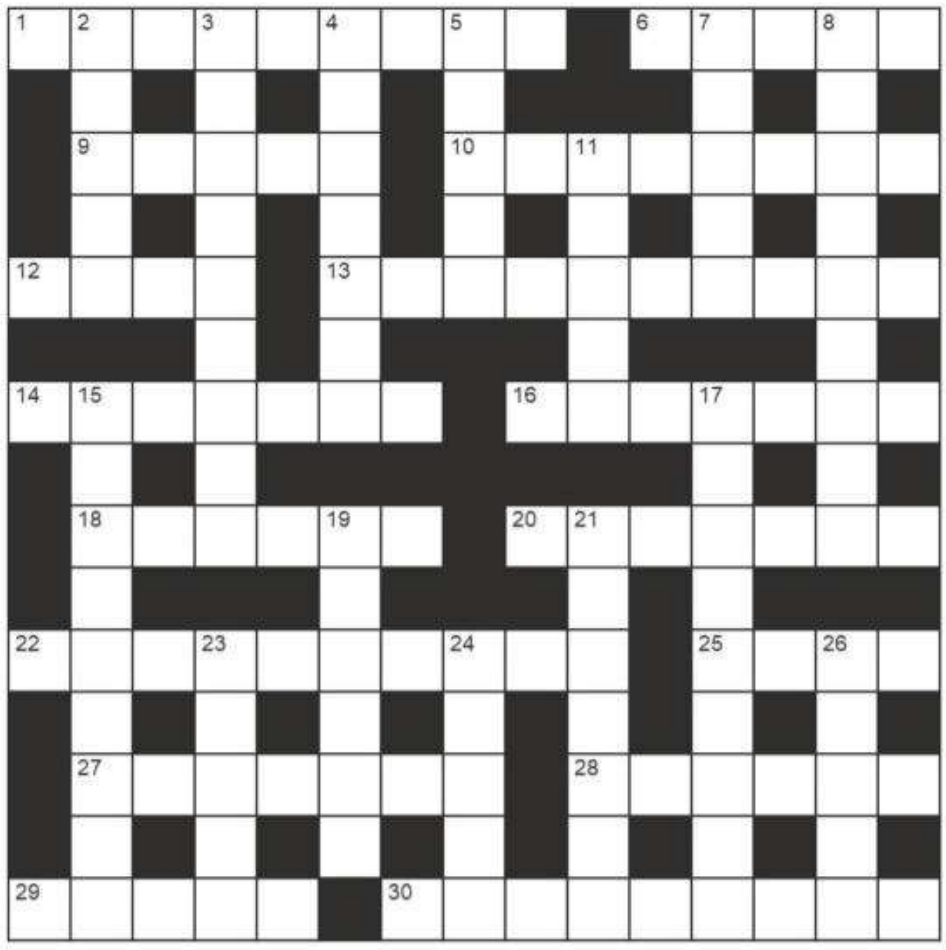
PRIZE CROSSWORD

Across

1 A member of the Gang of Four, the most influential woman in the People's Republic of China until her downfall in 1976 (5,4)
6 Garry ____, US author and historian, awarded the Pulitzer prize for his *Lincoln at Gettysburg* (1992) (5)
9 First of the "Five Good Emperors", the succession of Roman rulers that included Trajan and Hadrian (5)
10 During the Civil War, a ____soldier was known as a Cavalier (8)
12 City in south-west England, named Aquae Sulis by its Roman founders (4)
13 Dame ___ ___ (left), distinguished English composer. Her close involvement with the suffragette movement inspired her work "The March of the Women" (1911) (5,5)
14 Political philosophy named after the Yugoslav communist leader who maintained his country's independence from the Soviet Union (7)
16 John Singer ___, US painter who settled in London, famed for his portraits of socialites (7)
18 Spanish name for a Native American people, the term derived from their settlements built with sun-dried bricks (6)
20 George M ___, 19th-century US inventor after whom a rail sleeping car is named (7)
22 Conflict involving Russian, French, British, Ottoman Turkish and Sardinian forces between 1853 and 1856 (7,3)
25 Historical story of medieval Icelandic (and some Scandinavian) literature (4)
27 Three-banked galley of which variations were used by the Phoenicians, ancient Greeks and Romans (7)
28 French politician in the 20th and 21st centuries, twice holder of the office of prime minister before becoming president (6)
29 High-ranking member of a Celtic religious faith in Gaul and the British Isles (5)
30 ____Park, British code-breaking centre famous for its work on the Enigma ciphering system during the Second World War (9)

Down

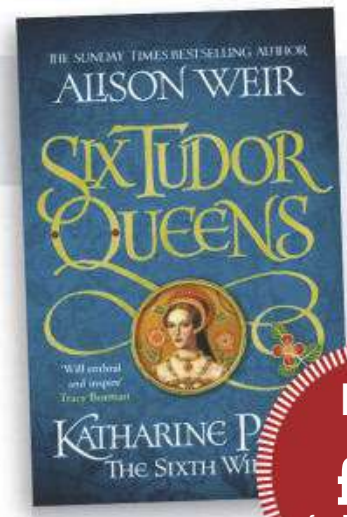
2 Ancient region, part of Anatolia, home to the geographer and historian Hecataeus of Miletus (5)
3 Sir Stafford Henry ____, 19th-century leader of the Conservative party, holder of high office but not that of PM (9)
4 Religious sect founded by George Fox in the 17th century (7)



5 Another name for the Union side in the American Civil War (5)
7 Name of a major world religion, literally "submission" or "surrender", that first emerged in the seventh century AD (5)
8 Passenger ship torpedoed by a German U-boat in controversial circumstances in May 1915 (9)
11 The Livadia Palace in this Ukrainian city was the venue of a conference of the main Allied leaders in 1945 (5)
15 Term for a Roman "victorious commander", which gradually came to mean "emperor" (9)
17 18th-century Anglo-Irish writer, known for his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (9)
19 Family of palaeoanthropologists whose finds in Africa from the late 1940s furthered understanding of human evolution (6)
21 Under a provision of a treaty signed here in 1713, Spain ceded Gibraltar to Britain (7)
23 19th/20th-century emperor of Japan whose reign transformed the feudal country into an industrialised power (5)
24 One of the world's greatest inventions, dating from about 5,000 years ago (5)
26 ____Darling, celebrated for her role in the rescue of survivors of a shipwreck on the Farne Islands in 1838 (5)

Compiled by **Eddie James**

Who is this transformative Japanese emperor? *(see 23 down)*



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Six Tudor Queens

Katharine Parr: The Sixth Wife

By Alison Weir

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● Open to residents of the UK (& Channel Islands). Post entries to ***BBC History Magazine*, June 2021 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA** or email them to ***june2021@historycomps.co.uk*** by 5pm on **9 June 2021**. ● Entrants must supply full name, address and phone number. The winners will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. Winners' names will appear in the August 2021 issue. By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in full in the box below. Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will use personal details in accordance with the Immediate Privacy Policy at *immediatemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy/privacy/* ● Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers and other promotions. If you would not like to receive these, please write 'NO INFO' on your entry. ● Branded BBC titles are licensed from or published jointly with BBC Studios (the commercial arm of the BBC). Please tick here ❑ if you'd like to receive regular newsletters, special offers and promotions from BBC Studios by email. Your information will be handled in accordance with the BBC Studios privacy policy: *bbcstudios.com/privacy. – bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/code-of-conduct*

Solution to our April 2021 crossword

Across 1 Cheops 4 Lanfranc 10 Melbourne 11 Smuts 12 Bosie 13 Leicester 14 Library 16 Sophia 19 Pascal 21 Tarbell 23 Aeschylus 25 Helen 27 Ivan I 28 Queen Anne 29 Messines 30 Engels
Down 1 Campbell 2 Ellis 3 Ptolemaic 5 Alexius 6 Fosse 7 Aquitaine 8 Cesare 9 Trilby 15 Bradshaws 17 Parthenon 18 Flanders 20 Lalique 21 Tester 22 Radium 24 Haiti 26 Lange

Five winners of *Mission France*:
J Olin, Cheshire; B Smith, West Midlands; A Redmore, Somerset; S Woodgate, Essex; R Osborn, London

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historyextra.com/royal-consorts

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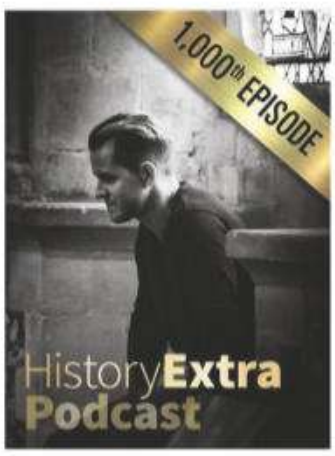

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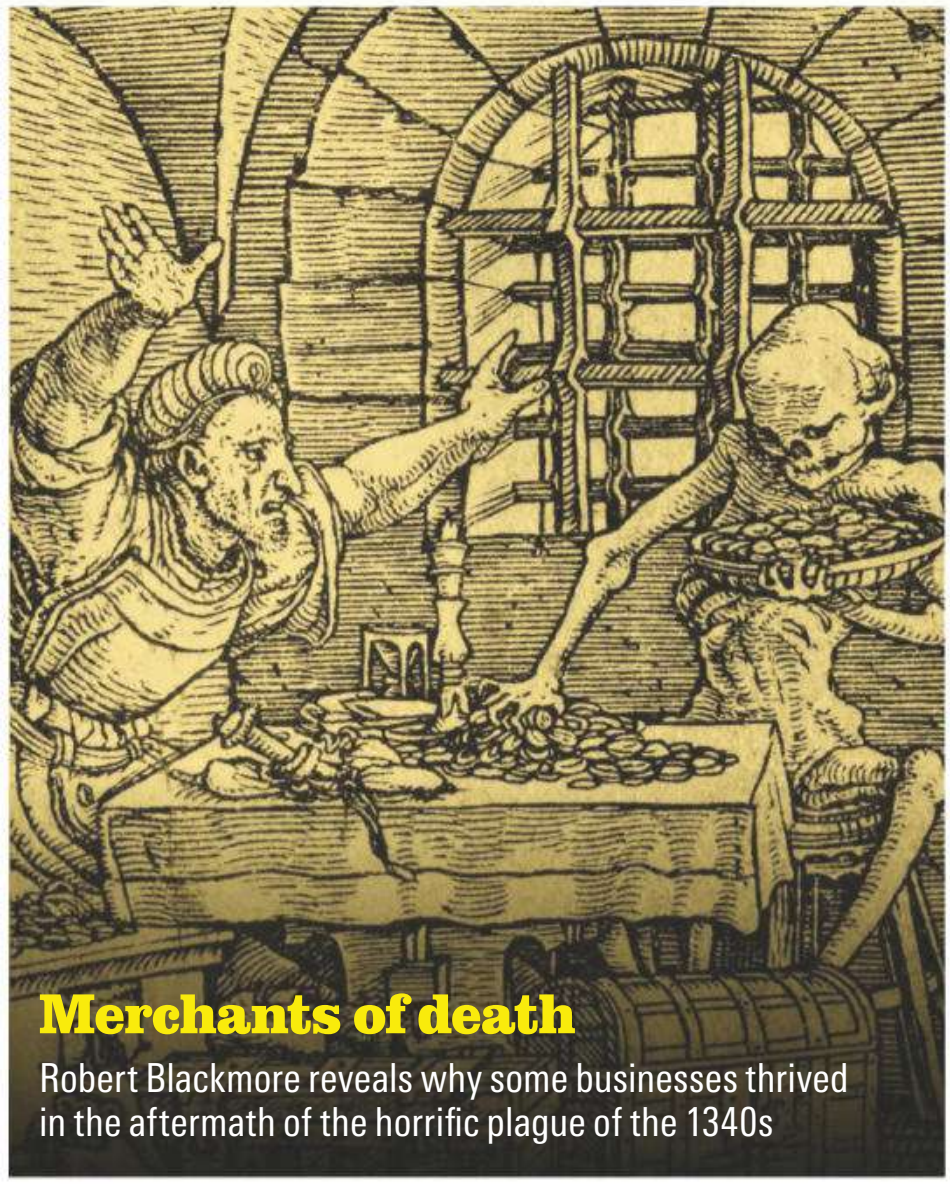
July issue on sale 10 June 2021



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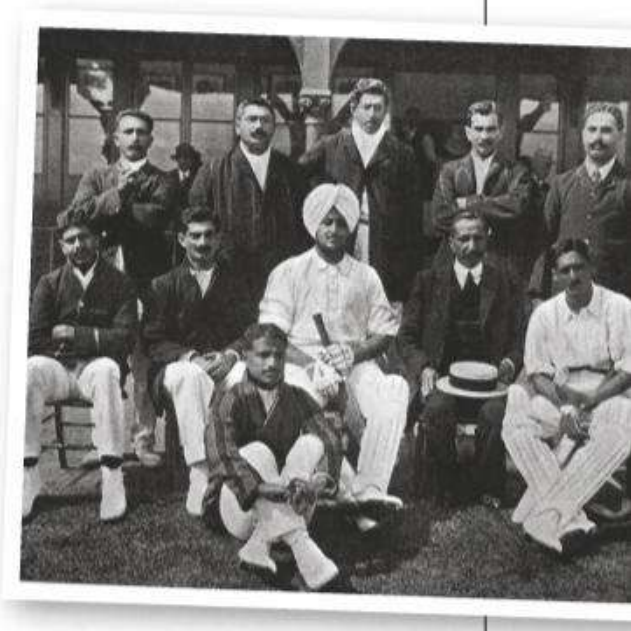
Crisis in Cuba

Serhii Plokhy offers a new take on the dramatic superpower clash over Cuba in 1962 that nearly sparked nuclear war



Colonial cricket

Souvik Naha considers how the sport was spread throughout the British empire

Hogarth and god

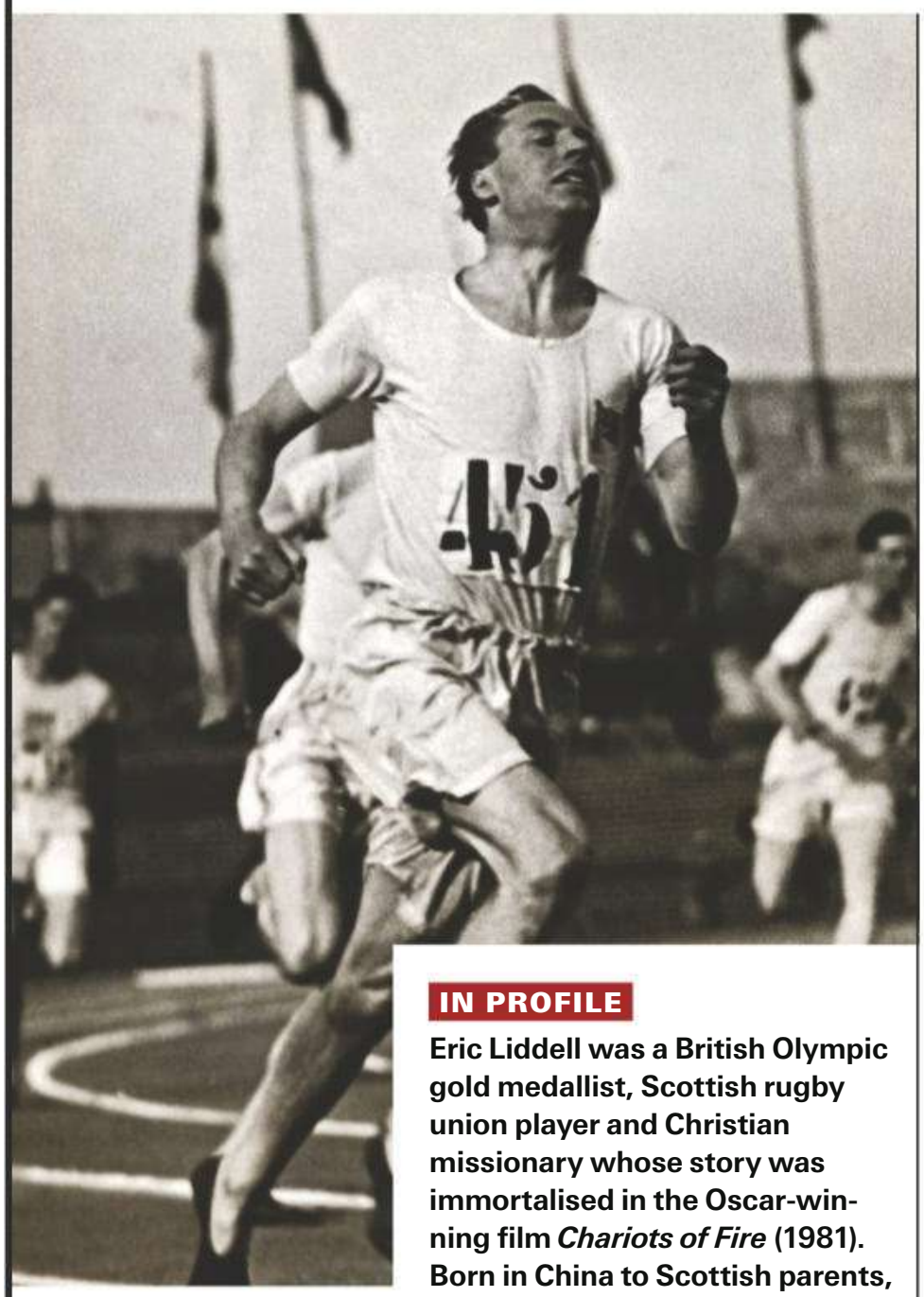
Jacqueline Riding on the Georgian satirist's religious inspiration

MY HISTORY HERO

*Broadcaster **Dan Walker** chooses*

Eric Liddell

1902–45



Eric Liddell winning the 400-metre final at the 1924 Olympic Games. According to Dan Walker, his running style was "totally unconventional, but successful"

IN PROFILE

Eric Liddell was a British Olympic gold medallist, Scottish rugby union player and Christian missionary whose story was immortalised in the Oscar-winning film *Chariots of Fire* (1981). Born in China to Scottish parents, he refused to run on a Sunday at the 1924 Olympic Games because of his religious beliefs, but he went on to win the 400-metre race. He later worked as a Christian missionary in China, where he died in a Japanese internment camp during the Second World War aged just 43.

> He had to be very strong-willed to stay true to his Christian beliefs, despite the promise of Olympic glory on the athletic track

When did you first hear about Eric Liddell? I suppose like many people, when I watched *Chariots of Fire* as a kid. It's one of those mesmerising films that you can't forget, and I made a documentary about him several years ago. I'm such a fan of both Eric and *Chariots* that I've even made my kids watch it! I've always loved both sport and history, so his story, which is so unique, really resonated with me.

What kind of man was he? He was very much his own man. Many people tried to persuade him to run on a Sunday [the day his 100-metre-sprint heat was held at the 1924 Olympics, which he refused to race on due to his Christian faith], because of his incredible ability as a runner. He had to be very strong-willed to stay true to his beliefs, despite the promise of Olympic glory on the athletic track. His faith was a huge part of his life, and he was a shining example of someone who believed some things were more important than winning a gold medal.

I'm also struck by the way he looked after people at the internment camp in China where he was held [from 1943–45], even sharing his food with fellow inmates – that for me is the mark of a great man.

What made Eric a hero? Ever since watching *Chariots of Fire*, I've thought: "What an incredible man." I love the fact that his running style was so unusual: head thrown back, arms flailing everywhere. Totally unconventional, but successful. But it's not so much his sporting achievements as what he did in later life, and particularly at the internment camp, that make Eric Liddell a hero to me. It's been claimed that at one point he passed up the chance to leave the camp in a prisoner exchange, instead giving the opportunity to someone else. I don't think many people would have acted so selflessly.

It's easy to act impressively when the world is watching, but the real sign of heroism is what you do when the world isn't watching.

Can you see any parallels between Eric's life and your own? I too have chosen not to work on a Sunday in my career – that's helped give me a perspective on things and allowed me not to let my work take over my life.

Could you have been a great athlete? No, but I did once win the school sports day 100-metre dash!

What would you ask Eric if you could meet him? I'd ask how close he came to running in that 100 metres – was there ever a question in his mind? I'd also ask what drove him to give up everything to go and be a missionary in China.

Dan Walker was talking to York Membery

Dan Walker presents *BBC Breakfast* and has also been the longstanding host of the BBC programme *Football Focus*. His book *Remarkable People: Extraordinary Stories of Everyday Lives* (Headline) is out now

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